

THE
END OF A
SONG

BY JEANNETTE
MARKS



C. P. sent to R. R. L. 10/1/36

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By Jeannette Marks

GALLANT LITTLE WALES. Sketches of its
People, Places, and Customs Illustrated.

THE END OF A SONG. Illustrated.

THROUGH WELSH DOORWAYS. Illustrated.

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
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The End of a Song



IN THE HOUSE OF SHON ROBERTS

The End of a Song

By Jeannette Marks

Author of "Through Welsh Doorways"



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To

THE DEAREST OF FRIENDS

ETHEL M. ARNOLD

HELEN M. CADY

and

MARY E. WOOLLEY

Diwedd y gan yw y geiniog

“There is not a thought or a feeling, not an act of beauty or nobility, whereof man is capable, but can find complete expression in the simplest, most ordinary life; and all that cannot be expressed therein must of necessity belong to the falsehoods of vanity, ignorance, or sloth.”

The End of a Song

I

“MAIR MORRIS has just died, she has!”

“Och, the pity! An’ all those children an’ the baby indeed!” exclaimed old Nan.

“Aye,” replied Mrs. Jenkins the Inn without much sympathy, “but ’t was like her to have all of twelve children an’ then die when they’re needin’ her. Aye indeed, it was ever so with Mair, a-slippin’ away when she was wanted. ’T was that way, too, when I was the village schoolmistress whatever.”

“Dear me,” said Mrs. Roberts again, still pityingly, “’t is twelve she is leavin’, you say, Jane?”

Mrs. Jenkins the Inn began to count:

The End of a Song

“Six — aye, she’d always a tendency to babies — ten — ’t was the same with her mother whatever — Tom, Mali, Pat — inherited — aye, twelve! Aye, the Spanish royal family could n’t have done better. An’ the oldest just twelve!”

“Well, they’re grand babies!” sighed old Nan whose married life had not known a single little one.

She looked out of her window thoughtfully. It was a comforting view of a prosperous Welsh village stretching along beside a turbulent little river, which joined a second river coming down through another valley and went on as one in a union which was literally full of sticks and stones. On to the surrounding hills the village rose in saffron, white, and pink washed cottages and in gray mountain farms. The mountains were bright with heather and

The End of a Song

gorse ; clouds sailed above peacefully with no hint of the autumn storms which were already filling the rivers ; the “chapel” at one end of the street attested the solidness of Bethel’s interests in sheep and slate ; and the church at the other, the antiquity — not to say decrepitude — of Bethel’s one-time established religious convictions.

Mrs. Jenkins the Inn gazed despairingly at Nan. “ ’T is n’t the question,” she objected. “ There are grand babies the world over, thick and plump as corn in a measure, but ’t is what’s to be done with ’em whatever.”

“ Dear me, can’t her man be lookin’ after them ? ” asked Nan innocently.

“ Her man ? Wil — look after the babies — *Wil Morris* ? ”

“ Aye, well, I was thinkin’ — ” began Nan sweetly.

The End of a Song

“Ye need n’t think, Mrs. Roberts. ’T is all their father can do to earn enough to feed ’em. An’ I’d like to know, Nan, where he’d find the time to be lookin’ after them whatever?”

“Yiss indeed,” assented Nan hastily. “I had n’t thought that far, Jane.”

“Well, I have,” concluded Mrs. Jenkins the Inn, touching her crisp gray hair thoughtfully. “We must pay some one to care for them till they ’re old enough to care for themselves. An’ that means money, and it seems as if my hands were never free of a subscription book. We’ve just paid for the chapel bell an’ now ’t is these Morrises!”

At the mention of money, Nan’s eyes changed, becoming both eager and embarrassed.

“Aye, money,” she repeated.

The End of a Song

“What can ye give towards helpin’, then?”

“Och, Jane,” hesitated Nan, in her little chirping way, “I—well, I’m thinkin’—”

“Can ye give a pound, say?” continued Mrs. Jenkins firmly.

Mrs. Roberts’s eyes opened wider and wider upon her friend.

“Aye, well, a pound! Would n’t ye rather have me sing? I have some grand fine new songs!”

To herself Mrs. Jenkins the Inn was thinking, “’T is always the same, she never has a penny to spend or to give, and that old husband as rich as the Bank of England! If he were my man I’d turn his pockets inside out, that I would!”

But to her friend quick energetic Jane Jenkins said kindly, “A concert? A ben-

The End of a Song

efit concert? 'T would be grand ! 'T would be makin' a fortune for them with you singin', Nan dear."

And the eager, embarrassed expression on Mrs. Roberts's face altered to pleasant anticipation.

Somehow up among those wonderful North Welsh mountains surrounding little Bethel there had budded and blossomed and bloomed the ideal of a larger friendship than is common to most women's way of thinking. Jane Jenkins's conception of friendship was not that of a village gossip who conceives of a friend only as of some one to talk with — largely about your family's private affairs — but as of some one to whom you owe allegiance and to whom you are under obligation. Ever since they had been school-children together Jane Jenkins had protected Nan.

The End of a Song

Hearty, good-natured Mr. Jenkins himself was not so important in her eyes. Mr. Jenkins had the manly virtue — unknown to the Morris male apparently — of being able to look out for himself, to take care of his family, and to play the popular host of a good inn. But with little Nan it was different, and it made Jane rage to think that her friend, wife of one of the wealthiest men within a radius of many miles, never had a shilling of her own to spend.

“Aye,” she continued, “’t is a grand benefit we’ll be havin’.”

“I’ve two new songs,” old Nan went on earnestly. “Shon says they’re beautiful indeed. Mrs. Hemans,” she concluded, as if there were magic in the name of that poetess.

“Dear people, ’t is a wonderful programme we’ll be havin’,” agreed Mrs.

The End of a Song

Jenkins the Inn, not caring what Shon might think, and firmly believing, as she had for forty years, that Nan's love for the old man was only a part of Nan's peculiar loveliness and not in the least due to his merits as a husband.

“An' I've a wonderful chorus.” Nan's eyes were shining and her cheeks pink. “I could sing the air if the others wished it. Aye, Shon brought it to me the last time he came back from Liverpool, he did.”

“Is it so!” exclaimed Mrs. Jenkins tersely. “Well, we'll be havin' a grand benefit at the Inn for the little Morrisises, aye, that we will.”

And that they did, as you will see.

II

COULD little Mrs. Roberts sing martial music? Certainly she could sing martial music. Up went her little old head, out went one little foot in its heavy boot, wide went her eyes with the glory of such song, and there rang out music, light, it is true, as the old voice was light, but with the march of brave steps in it and the shout of brave hearts. But she was at her best with a love song, such as "Sweet Rose of Llan Meilen." If any one had asked her why she could sing a love song better than any other kind, Nan would have answered that it was because she loved Shon. How the villagers held their breath with her when she came to that line, "My love will endure for Llan Meilen's sweet Rose"! And how they loved the ballad "Gwilym Glyn

The End of a Song

and Ruth of Dyffryn " ! They liked it all, and could never hear it often enough, its beginning, —

“In the depth of yonder valley,
Where the fields are bright and sunny,
Ruth was nurtured fair and slender
'Neath a mother's eye so tender,”

the caroling of the thrush, the children playing together in childhood, the youthful beauty that was before they discovered that “Love had linked its silent fetter.” Aye, that was a grand line, and all the youths and maidens moved a little closer to one another, and the old people pretended not to see, yet had a sly glance to discover what the young ones did. Then how their hearts thrilled when the story actually began, old Nan clasping her little hands in their black lisle gloves tighter and tighter together, “Ruth had riches—

The End of a Song

not so Gwilym," and the stern sire, and poor Gwilym roaming about and "pensive sitting in the thicket," and pitiful Ruth, wailing and in tears, surveying a "blank horizon" for Gwilym! Not once did Nan's audience ever reflect that Ruth ought to have been sensibly looking in the thicket for pensive William, instead of telescopically surveying blank heavens where William was not and, oh, sad, glad tale! was not to be. Still, one sweet chance they had to vow undying love. Could any one but old Nan have sung those lines as Nan sung them, while the young people felt for one another's hands, and Shon, Nan's husband, brushed a tear away, and Mrs. Jenkins the Inn looked almost tender? Gwilym crossed the ocean while Ruth kept her vow unbroken, refused rich suitors pressed on her by her stern sire, and let the years go by,

The End of a Song

dreaming always of William. Then one evening — here the audience fairly gasped with the excitement as old Nan's eyes grew larger and larger and she drew herself up to her full little height — then one evening Ruth thought

“ she saw her Gwilym

Cross the meadows green of Dyffryn.”

It was William, she did see him! But not her *poor* William. Rather it was a lover with “gold and pearls” soon displayed for the benefit of Ruth's cold parent. Even the cruellest sire will capitulate before gold and pearls, and Ruth's did.

“Quick the wedding day was settled,
Ruth to Gwilym then was married,
Long they lived in bliss and plenty,
Pride and envy of the valley.”

At this dénouement the decorous Bethel audience went mad; it clapped and

The End of a Song

stamped, and Nan, smiling on them and on old Shon, who was wiping his eyes, reclapsed her little black-gloved hands and sang the last stanza all over again.

Oh, those were wonderful concerts in Bethel! And this benefit for the little Morrisises—all seated in an appealing row on the platform, Tom, Mali, and Pat asleep on the shoulders of the older children—was destined to be, not only in the pleasure it gave but in the history of Bethel, the most important of all. Even the last Eisteddfod was to sink into insignificance. And in many such singing festivals had old Nan—and young Nan, too—taken part. In no one of their great choral chants was the voice of any man, woman, or even child of a more exquisite and fresh quality. On this night how Nan Roberts sang in her high lilting voice with

The End of a Song

the chirp of joy and little gasp of pain in it: "Sad Died the Maiden," and "Walter Sele," and a favorite "Farewell to Wales" by Mrs. Hemans, and "The Hall of Cyn-ddylan," also by that Welsh-born poetess!

At the conclusion of the concert the whole audience stood up, Tom, Mali, and Pat held in stout arms, while every man, woman, and child, Nan waving her little black-gloved hand solemnly up and down to beat time, sang together in such voices as you will never hear anywhere else in the world but in Wales, —

"Land of the Cymry! thou art still,
In rock and valley, stream and hill,
As wild and grand,
As thou hast been in days of yore,
As thou hast ever been before,
As thou shalt be for evermore,
My Father-land!"

The End of a Song

Ah, at that moment they would n't have changed their old Nan Roberts for Jenny Lind herself! They thought they knew — and maybe they were not wrong — that Nan's was the finest voice in all those hills. At least they were proud in the certain knowledge that people would come from many miles around about — even from neighboring cities like Carnarvon and Conway, each of which had been the centre of an Eisteddfod — to hear Mrs. Roberts sing.

When they went streaming out from the concert, it was raining harder than usual. As they were accustomed to rain, this downpour made very little difference to the dispersing audience. There were grandfather clocks in Bethel with bases wearing the flood marks of one hundred

The End of a Song

and fifty years. If the clocks, whose pedal extremities were unable to move, could bear the flood, why they who could move both hand and foot were not going to mind a little thing like a rain.

Shon tucked Nan's arm comfortably into his and they splashed along in the wet.

"'T is grand an' fine ye can sing, darlin'," he said proudly.

Nan sighed a little. Somehow the wet and dark and the ever-present problem of how to get a penny for her own use seemed rather dreary after the exaltation of Ruth and Gwilym and the shout of the chorus.

"Aye," she replied absent-mindedly, "but, Shon, do you think I might have a little spendin' money, a few s'illin's a week, do ye? I'd be takin' great care of it, indeed I would."

The End of a Song

“What would ye do with it, Nan? Ye have everythin’ provided. I’m thinkin’ all the time for ye.”

“Och, can’t ye understand? It’s just to give away a little—a few s’illin’s that were all my own.”

“But ’t is so much easier for ye to send the beggars to me, Nan.”

“I know,” she began, and there she stopped.

How could she tell him that he had mortified her when she had sent the “beggars” to him, by giving a mere pittance, while Jane Jenkins’s husband, who was not one tenth as well off, had given generously from his money-till in the Inn?

“Don’t I provide everythin’?” asked old Shon anxiously, trying to draw Nan’s arm a little closer into his.

The End of a Song

“Aye, ye’re a grand provider,” Nan’s voice was tender, “but — ”

“But what?”

“Och, ye don’t understand, I’m thinkin’. Never to have a penny to do with!”

“Dear me,” said Shon reproachfully, “what’s mine is yours.”

Nan did not reply. They splashed along silently towards their comfortable home. It was the old, old argument, she thought, and it had always come to the same end.

III

WHEN Nan and Shon awoke the next morning it was still pouring. It rained harder and harder till literally you could not see from one cottage to another. The stone-paved streets ran water, water gushed and plunged from the rocks of the mountains surrounding Bethel, and the two rivers which joined in the centre of the village to make a third not much more imposing, roared and thundered under the bridge as if, had there been any doubt in your mind about their powers, they meant now to show you what even a very small river with a whole bare mountain-side for a shed could do under provocation. Already the water edged the streets and the foaming flood reached for the apex of the

The End of a Song

bridge, when up on big round bold Moel Hebog a cloud burst.

The result was inevitable. Inside of twenty minutes—for transit is rapid down the steep rocky side of a Welsh mountain—there was a condition of affairs in Bethel which not the oldest inhabitant, who could tell you all about the water marks on the pedestals of the grandfather clocks, could parallel. In fact there was no time for loquacity. The foaming flood, carrying with it cows and sheep, now rushed over the bridge, and Mrs. Morgan the Shop, whose home was next to the bridge, had just time to seize her money-till, to see her unrivaled stock of picture post cards go floating out of the door, and the garden bench come bobbing comfortably in over the sill, when the water reached the level of her coun-

The End of a Song

ter. Mrs. Morgan the Shop let sugar and flour and meal and salt and pepper and spices and cigarettes and sweets melt away even as the lust of this world perishes, and struggled, money under her arm, for the stairway, which reaching, she grabbed the banisters and skipped nimbly up to the second story.

Groaning at the trap in which she was caught, she stuck her head out of the window. After the cloud-burst the clouds had lifted somewhat and she could see thrust out of every second-story window a terrified head. Above the roar of the waters her neighbors feebly shouted to one another. She was greatly surprised to hear Mr. Jenkins the Inn bellowing out of one of her windows, within five feet of her, to Mrs. Jenkins the Inn, who hung out of a window over the Inn courtyard, the four

The End of a Song

daughters clustered anxiously about her. Mr. Jenkins was shouting with no mean power, but the indignant little rivers drowned the sound of his big voice.

Nobody could ever tell that day how people happened to be in the second storeys, from which they thrust out their heads to take part in the wailing and screaming of Welsh ll's and in the horrified observation of real estate and livestock which the furious little rivers gobbled up. Mr. Jenkins the Inn was probably just on his way into Mrs. Morgan's the Shop to buy sugar — that is, he always thought it was sugar, but Mrs. Jenkins thought not, she thought it was tobacco — when that good host saw a wave of fully two feet of cloud-burst coming in at Mrs. Morgan's back door. He did not stop to argue the question or to help the lady-resident to secure her property, he

The End of a Song

merely skipped with a nimbleness unknown to him since the days of courting Mrs. Jenkins, for the stairs and the second story. He made both, and then once safe, his first thought, as a good husband's and father's should be, was for his wife and the girls. He was doing his duty, roaring unheard mandates from the window, when his attention was diverted by the village coach, visible at a distance, speeding down the road.

On the hem of the submerged part of the village had collected a large group of the unsubmerged natives. The women waving their aprons up and down, the men swinging their hats around, and, all shouting, they rushed wildly at the approaching coach, which was a very dashing affair and could not possibly have known that in a cloud-just-burst it had a rival even more

The End of a Song

dashing. Otherwise, you know, that is, if this projectile velocity had not been headed off, so great is coachly momentum, the coach would undoubtedly have run right into four feet of foaming infuriated water boiling through the village streets. The unsubmerged drew a breath of relief when the horses were pulled back on their haunches and the Coach himself jumped down. Mrs. Coach was in one of the flooded houses, and Himself ran to the very edge of the raging torrent, his lady screaming objurgations from a second-story window, which the gallant Mr. Coach heeded only after two of the unsubmerged had seized him by the elbows and dragged him out of the water. Otherwise who knows what might have happened! So close was the sympathy between these two married people that Mrs. Coach in a great downpour always went

The End of a Song

out and stood under the rain pipes and let the water run over her curls and down the back of her neck, drenching her thoroughly, for she could not bear to think how wet and miserable Mr. Coach was, driving his four-in-hand.

The rivers were now receding as rapidly as they had risen. They had merely wished to show what they could do with a robust cloud-burst as escort, and, having done a good deal, they were stepping back with gentle lady-like haste, probably saying under their breath, "Just let any one call us a brook again! The idea, a brook, indeed! Did you ever see a brook act like this whatever?" And as no one ever had seen a brook act like this *whatever*, and the cloud-burst had reached the sea by this time and found out what a little squirt he was after all, there was no one either to shout

The End of a Song

“Bravo!” or to say, “Aye, indeed, did you ever?”

But even as the little rivers were receding with amiable haste, certain things were discovered in Bethel which the inhabitants will remember and discuss for many generations. As the little rivers, I say, stepped back into their beds with quiet and becoming modesty, the village bridge dropped in upon them. This staunch old bridge with some masonry from a Roman time had fallen victim to the fair rivers with an amatory haste ever characteristic of the Roman as well as of the Celt. No one pitied the rivers and their clogged-up bed, yet every one at the windows and many on their doorsills said, “Och, the pity!” For there on one side where he carried on his fine bakery business stood Glyn Edwards, and on the other stood his two days’ bride

The End of a Song

wringing her hands and weeping. If you have never been a bride or groom, whatever, there is no use trying to imagine what the yawning chasm between Glyn and his beloved meant. If you have never been separated for a night from anything so fair as Glyn's bride, you cannot know the agony those two foolish, charming young people suffered.

As Nan watched from her doorway, she said in her heart how glad she was that Shon was at home. She had only thanksgiving for the old man who stood beside her, and never a thought about the lack of a pocket penny. And in song-wise this gratitude was all turning itself into music which, the next time Glyn and his bride heard the old woman sing, would seem to them as the very speech of their own hearts, and would set them wondering how

The End of a Song

Mrs. Roberts could know so well what they felt. It was past their youthful understanding that anything so ancient had ever been a bride.

It was discovered also that even as Mrs. Morgan the Shop's groceries had melted away, so also had the supplies been destroyed or swept out of the Inn. Mrs. Jenkins was now in command of what was left. Except for the table set with tea, bread and butter, jam and cakes, in the coffee room, which had floated up towards the ceiling, its edibles unharmed for the two guests for whom the table had been laid, there was not a bite of food in the house. The indignant little river had overturned everything it could. It had tried — although without success, which, being in a high state of rage, did not discourage it at all — to upset the laws of gravity by flow-

The End of a Song

ing up the chimney. Before its force the discreet old china cupboard had turned over gently on its back, not even cracking a cup or saucer of the precious set. The substantial roast of beef on the sideboard, together with a lot of agitated little salts and peppers, had gone down before it. The big Bible which Jane Jenkins kept on the slender stand for the use of any guests who might wish to read, flapped a few leaves feebly as the flood reached its level and slid off into the profane *mêlée* of victual and plates. If only the guests had been swept out with other useless baggage, that would have left something for the family to eat. But they had not been.

In the midst of considering this dilemma, warm-hearted Mrs. Jenkins stopped, threw up her hands with a perturbation uncommon to her, and shouting, "The Morrises!

The End of a Song

the Morrises!" sped down the littered village street, Mr. Jenkins and the girls, Nan and Shon, and many another Bethelite following after.

No one had thought of Wil Morris and the twelve motherless little Morrises for whom the benefit had been held the night before. Yet their hut stood alone, just outside the village on the shaly bank of the river, and in the very path river and cloud-burst had swept.

IV

THE last great flood had come punctually one hundred years ago — if you may refer to anything in the past as punctual. Until this flood reached the Morris hut, you could not expect Wil Morris to reflect upon the precision of its arrival. The night of the benefit when it had begun to come, Wil observed it with suspicion. There had been times in past late Augusts when the babies, the tattered illustrated copies of *Pilgrim's Progress* and the Bible, the old box, with the only remnants of Mrs. Morris's young finery inside and its stout hide cover outside, had all to be picked up hastily and put on to the beds built into the walls. Had there been a caster or stand to set the little Morrises in, as one puts so many con-

The End of a Song

diments into cruets, you might have expected them to stay where they were put. But a bed is an exceedingly liberal place, and the little ones in their unconfined fun kept tumbling off and having to be picked up out of the few inches of mud and water which an annual flood deposited on the floor. Now with Mrs. Morris gone and only Gelert, the solemn old Welsh greyhound, to guard the babies, kind-hearted Wil Morris dreaded the flood as never before.

Even the benefit with its generous proceeds could not comfort him as he lay through the long night amidst his babies, knowing that the water was rising higher and higher outside on the shaly bank of the river. In nights gone by, Wil had cried his faithful heart out while the children slept peacefully in litters in the three beds of their only room and home. Not that

The End of a Song

he would have dragged tired Mrs. Morris back into life out of that stronghold of unawakening peace she had found, but that he needed her. Wil had always gone groping until he had found Mrs. Morris, and now he was groping again.

As he lay there in the early dawn, which was without a ray of color, the twelfth and tiniest baby on one side and Mali and Pat on the other, he was saying over the names of the children to himself. The Morrises had become more and more perplexed about names as their brood arrived faster and faster, not by any wish of Mr. and Mrs. Morris and with what they had thought reasonable indignation that fate should play them such a trick. Eight or nine children they would have accepted without question, but when it came to the tenth they began to be displeased.

The End of a Song

The last three children but one had been christened Tom, Mali, and Pat, the names to which the village kittens usually answered. The names were familiar and convenient because they were short. If you had been tired Mrs. Morris and had eleven children to call to dinner—Megan, Rhydderch, Jemima, Howell, Deborah, Robyn, Lowrie, Gwynfryn, Tom, Mali, and Pat,—don't you think that when you reached the names Tom, Mali, and Pat, kittens or no kittens, you would have been glad?

Wil was repeating these names to himself and had just reached the little nameless one, when he heard a wash against the rickety door. Ah, he knew what that was, that was the stroke of the water on his threshold! Well, if the children were to have anything at all to eat, he must get

The End of a Song

up and get it for them, for the water would soon be in the fireplace. The tiny baby which had been lying in his arms he put down very tenderly and stole across the half-dark room. He broke up some brush the children had collected, a few little strips of wood, and took one good-sized piece of coal. The fire was soon crackling cheerfully and sending out aromatic puffs of smoke and lively spurts of flame. Although he could see a line of silver creeping under his very doorsill, yet Wil felt more cheerful as he put the kettle on to boil for the tea. And soon the chatter of children's voices and the clatter as they spooned the tea and cut their bread, warmed their father as even the flames had not. Gelert, too, was satisfied with the glee of these young things and occasionally licked little Tom's face. And the

The End of a Song

three-year old baby licked back, and both were pleased. Gelert was Tom's hero, and the results to human manners were lamentable at times.

Only Maggie and Richard looked troubled about the flood and helped their father to take everything off the floor and pile it on the one shelf or on the tops of the beds. From their experience of floods in past years, they thought it would be hours before they themselves would have to get on to the beds, for there was a considerable slant to the floor covered by slate flagstones which made the fireplace end of the hut still out of water when the other had already become submerged.

The father was looking out of the little window and wishing that the rain would stop and the water come no higher, when the door swung in and what seemed to be

The End of a Song

a wave washed in all the way up to the fireplace, wetting every single child.

"To the beds!" shouted the father anxiously.

"Dad, see, 't is fillin' the hut!" cried Maggie.

Wil had just time to yell "Run! run!" and knee-deep the bigger children staggered out of the house, scrambling for the higher bank, while the father fought his way out, the baby in his arms and little Morrisies clinging to him much as little clams fasten on to a big clam.

Exhausted, drenched, expecting the end of the world, the terrified father and children realized suddenly that one of them had not escaped. No one had thought of Tom, and Tom was still in the cabin against which the black foaming water rushed four feet deep.

V

OCH, what a morning that was! Wil Morris—the worthless fellow!—had not hesitated one fraction of an instant to start back for little Tom. But then he had seen Gelert holding the child's head high out of the water, both carried downstream with the furious flood. Even the rescue of Tom and Gelert, however, could not make it anything except tragedy as they watched their only home melt away before the raging water almost as easily as Mrs. Morgan's groceries had done. For a while the little door had swashed to and fro, and then with a foolish effort to stand upright without a hinge to its planks, it, too, with objects even more valiant, had slid off downstream. After that out had

The End of a Song

bobbed Mrs. Morris's box and, jaunty to the last, spun madly around in the swift current, for all the world as if anything with such gay contents must pirouette to the end.

As they saw their sole inheritance floating away, the older children cried more and more loudly, tears that ceased only when they beheld a hole appear in the stone wall of their cottage which had always seemed to them as a veritable fortress. After the first hole came another and another till the walls were riddled with them. Finally with a plunge in fell the roof. At this the little Morrises screamed and clung frantically to their father, crying out "Dad! dad! dad!" in despair. They could not imagine existence without that miserable hovel. Then as if a hand had reached out of the water,

The End of a Song

what was left of their shelter was brushed away and not a stone was visible. Not a stick nor a stone nor a bit of thatch was left to mark the place which had been home to them. The indignant little rivers had done their work, and with haste to overtake their lordly cloud-burst they washed on as fast as possible.

On the hillside, still looking down on the place where their home had been, Mrs. Jenkins the Inn and her hasty retinue found the Morrises, Wil sheltering the new-born baby inside his coat, Gelert licking little Tom, perhaps with the dogly hope that his skin was fur, smooth, it is true, that would dry even as his own shaggy coat would before long, and the other children sobbing loudly.

Into the midst of this group Jane Jenkins swept with the vigor of rehabilitation.

The End of a Song

“Wil Morris, och, Wil Morris,” she exclaimed, “what are ye sittin’ here for, doin’ nothin’ an’ the children gettin’ that wet whatever!”

Wil drew the coat a little closer about the baby and said, “Aye,” dully.

“Aye what?” snapped Mrs. Jenkins. “’T is all carried away, I see.”

“The pity!” said Nan, who was reaching inside Wil’s coat and gently extricating the damp baby which she wrapped in her own warm, dry shawl.

“What are ye standin’ here for, Wil Morris, lettin’ all the children get soaked to their skins?” continued Mrs. Jenkins.

“Where should we be goin’?” inquired Wil, buttoning his coat over the place where the baby had been.

“Where indeed! Have ye ever lacked for friends? Do ye see the village yonder?”

The End of a Song

“Aye, but the twelve!”

“Come, come now, let us be off!”

The villagers had been assembling in larger and larger groups.

As the women rushed up they half-cried or shouted, “Are they all livin’?”

“Aye indeed,” replied Jane Jenkins, by this time very much in command.

“Och, the shame, they’re wet!” screamed one hysterical woman.

“Aye, a trifle damp,” admitted Mrs. Jenkins, collecting children and counting noses.

Mr. Jenkins the Inn was beaming upon everybody and saying comfortably, “Aye, they’re all safe, aye, safe but damp,” and enjoying his wife’s boundless capacity to manage a difficult—not to say a wet—situation. It took only a little thing like a cloud-burst, he was sure, to bring out his

The End of a Song

wife's finest qualities, and anything more able than Jane Jenkins you could not find.

Mrs. Jenkins looked about to see what had become of poor drenched little Tom. Old Shon had quietly picked up the terrified child and was well on his way towards Bethel, Gelert stalking behind him. After Shon, Nan tripped along as fast as she could go through wet heather and grass, the baby held securely in her arms.

"Ten," remarked Jane monosyllabically.

Then she parceled out the children for the walk to the village and brought up the rear with Mali and Pat, the tiniest and most helpless, under her arms, like little pigs being taken to market.

It was a scene of desolation into the midst of which they walked, the village divided in two by the broken bridge,

The End of a Song

one half of the inhabitants shouting across to the other to know whether *all* the Morris were safe.

Even Glyn Edwards, the desperate bridegroom, as he saw a long procession of unmistakable Morris, big and little, file past, yelled, "Did you find them?"

"Aye," hulloed Mr. Jenkins.

"Nine?" inquired Glyn Edwards.

"All!" bellowed the host.

Then followed a desperate pantomime between young Mr. and Mrs. Edwards, gestures which represented the intensity of the first two days of married life, which is to the rest of married life what double cream is to skimmed milk. After a final passionate farewell glance, Mrs. Edwards turned resolutely into the Inn, where she assisted in drying off the babies, big and little, while her forlorn spouse

The End of a Song

was left viewing the yawning bridge chasm and the littered streets of their once tidy village of Bethel.

One of Mrs. Morgan's large grocery boxes was jammed tightly into the open doorway of the Shop. Some of the Robertses' cows, which had retreated before the flood, were cruising around, lowing dolefully. Mud was over everything, and in the corner where the churchyard joined on to a row of houses was a pile of every conceivable sort of rubbish. Over beyond the church wall some of the graves near the normal flood line, untouched in former years, had become pits, out of which the cloud-burst had swept, as might be, body or bones. On Glyn's side of the river, which was the north side and highest, were the village stables, in which fortunately the waters had not reached high

The End of a Song

enough to drown the horses, but had contented themselves with sweeping out dung-heaps and fodder and straw from the untidy piles in which Mr. Coach had left them.

Stronger and stronger there rose to greet Glyn's nostrils not only the smells from manure and mud but a stench unlike anything ever sniffed in Bethel before. Uncomfortably he got up and walked back to the bakery where the big baked loaves lay in gelatinous heaps wherever the water had not washed them completely away. Then trying to stifle the ache he suffered for Mrs. Glyn and the anxiety he felt at the thought of her duties — washing other people's babies is a dangerous business—he betook himself to his own duty and began clearing out his oven for the new baking, which would be more needed now than ever before.

VI

WHEN Nan reached the house, the little nameless one wrapped in her shawl, Shon had already called in their fat servant maid, Katy, from gossiping on the street, had a fire started in the largest bedroom, and with clumsy fingers was unbuttoning Tom's clothes. Husband and child and dog all looked up as Nan came lightly into the room. At sight of the baby the plump maid called out, "Did you ever, mum? What shall I fetch, mum? Och, the little white love, mum!" which the nameless one was not at all, but red and very wrinkled and screaming as no "love" ever should.

Tom was soon undressed, a warm blanket put around him in the big bed, and

The End of a Song

ginger tea poured down his little throat, and "Royal Embrocation" rubbed on his chest and feet. The servant made a great clatter with the cups and bottles and her heavy copper-toed boots. Above all this racket and the baby's cries, Nan and Shon carried on a conversation.

"Och, 't is too little to take the milk so !"

Nan deftly knotted a bit of sugar in a thin rag and dipped it into the warm milk, but the baby stiffened its tiny hands in protest and sputtered in an alarming fashion.

"Nay, nay, 't is n't what it wants," said Shon, bending over the wrinkled crying morsel.

"Babi del ! babi del !" called little Tom, sitting up in bed to help. "She wants her bokkle."

The End of a Song

“Och, the lamb!” exclaimed Nan. “They’ll be havin’ them at the chemist’s whatever. But they’ll be costin’ — let me see —”

“Sixpence,” said the plump servant maid who had had baby brothers and sisters, almost by the gross.

“Aye, well, a si’llin’, Shon, yiss, please,” urged Nan. “We’ll be havin’ the best nursin’ bottle for the little love.”

Have you ever been sixty and bought your first nursing bottle for your first baby? In Nan’s mind the importance of this moment was never to be forgotten, and she scurried across the street, looking neither to right nor to left, around the corner, and into the chemist’s door over which hung a sign “Bethel Pill Depot.”

When Nan hurried in, Mr. Morgan

The End of a Song

the Chemist was gazing about his devastated shop.

“A bottle — a *nursin’* bottle, Mrs. Roberts?” he said in a reproachful voice. Surely the flood had been enough, or too much, without this folly of second childhood.

“Aye,” replied Nan, her eyes shining and her wrinkled cheeks pink; “your best whatever, Mr. Morgan.”

Mr. Morgan’s eyes traveled mechanically from the littered floor to a high shelf, and then he stopped and repeated, “A *nursin’* bottle?”

“Yiss, please, for the Morris baby,” answered Nan, her eyes hanging as if life depended upon it on Mr. Morgan the Chemist’s raised hand.

“Och, so,” commented Mr. Morgan; then this was not second childhood over-

The End of a Song

taking the Robertses, but merely an intelligible baby. "They 're safe," he added, referring to his bottles, his hand completing its motion, "aye, Mrs. Roberts, all."

Mr. Morgan brought down two boxes. "'Tis lucky indeed the flood couldn't reach the upper shelves or the bottles would have gone with everythin' else—aye, everythin'," repeated Mr. Morgan sadly, his eyes surveying the litter on the floor, which represented boxes of licorice, ginger, alum, herbs of every imaginable kind, sweets, and a dozen other things, chiefly patent medicines and pills.

"Is it the best?" demanded Nan, looking skeptically at an object shaped something like a boat, and not like the round billets her babyhood had known.

"Aye," said Mr. Morgan the Chemist, giving a demonstration, "'t is held so!"

The End of a Song

“Well indeed!” exclaimed Nan delightedly.

“It can’t roll over, Mrs. Roberts.”

“Dear me — an’ the price?”

“One an’ six.”

Nan looked ruefully at her single shilling, then her dear old eyes flashed with a spirit of enterprise.

“I’ll be payin’ you for it later, Mr. Morgan, if ’t is satisfactory.”

“Indeed, mum, yiss,” replied Mr. Morgan. Certainly an account with the wife of the richest man in town was safe.

“’T is the *very* best?” asked Nan once more, and reassured on that point she hurried out of the shop and towards home.

Such a scouring in hot water as that bottle received, and then the nice warm milk, milked from one of the peripatetic cows, and prepared just as the label on the

The End of a Song

box directed, and the nipple which Nan's old fingers stretched down over the bottle neck, and then the bottle *and* the baby! Och, that was a conjunction whatever, *the* conjunction of all the ages!

Spellbound Nan and Shon stood over the wee thing when the sucking began, watching its tiny puckered mouth, drinking in the little gurgling sounds of comfort as the baby drew in the milk, seeing some of the wrinkles from its wrinkled face smooth out and its helpless hands open and contract with the warm joy of the milk, much as a comfortable pussy spreads out and contracts its soft toes.

"Och, the wonder!" said Nan.

"'T was all it wanted whatever," replied Shon.

Tom and Gelert were quite forgotten, as they stood there watching the baby at

The End of a Song

its busy nursing, the tiny face that grew more and more peaceful, the little eyes that closed and then the little lips that opened with the slumber that had come.

The one joy that they had missed! The bliss that no money could buy even the rich! Nan drew nearer Shon's coat-sleeve and then put both her hands tightly around his arm.

"Och, hundred an' a thousand!" murmured Nan.

"Aye, the world's value!" echoed Shon.

VII

MRS. ROBERTS certainly did not belong to that class of society which changes its dress for dinner, but as that is the class of society which allows its flowers, when wilted, to be thrown into coal-scuttles and dust-bins, and turns its babies over to the care of hirelings — often an advantage to the babies — probably she would not have wished to belong to it. Mrs. Roberts cherished her flowers and she saw with a tenderness indescribable for one who has no imagination, the last lovely wilted petal burn in the clear flame of her fireplace.

And with a joy infinitely greater and more tender did she watch over the little nameless one and Tom. The hours since that eventful yesterday had held treasures

The End of a Song

such as she had never known before. Tom was imp and angel by turns; and as for Shon it was the imp he loved best, and as for Nan, the angel. When she was tucking him into bed that first night, he put his little arms around her neck, saying, "I'se sorter tired, Misser Nan, I is; God made me sorter tired, He did." "Aye," Nan had agreed, "a day indeed!" And with Shon sitting by the fire reading a Liverpool daily, and Gelert, with his long nose on the bed, watching him, and Nan beside him, little Tom fell asleep in the midst of such care and luxury as he had never known before.

When he awoke in the morning he was chanting a song, for he was a blithe little fellow. From their bedroom husband and wife could hear him, and Nan was certain that no song had ever sounded

The End of a Song

so beautiful in her ears, and Shon would have been content to have the tuneless ditty go on and on, baby-wise, forever. Tom did not seem to grieve because he was away from his brothers and sisters. He asked where they were and what they were doing, but he was only like every one else in Bethel in his immediate devotion to Nan.

When Jane Jenkins the Inn came bustling into the Robertses' house early that morning, she exclaimed good-naturedly at sight of him, "Dear people, whose little boy is this?"

"I'se Misser Nan's Morris Tom," came the answer proudly.

"Och," sighed Nan to herself, "if only he were!"

Already she knew, for after a long seed-time the plant had shot quickly to a

The End of a Song

full growth, what it was to possess a child's love. Already she worshiped little Tom with his bad and good coming like the open and shut of cloud and sunshine, as if he were her very own, bone of her bone and flesh of her flesh, and yet with the conscious pain added that he was not hers after all.

Jane Jenkins had come on business, and her pocket bulged with the subscription book which she had thrust into it.

“How's the baby?” she asked.

“Good as gold, Jane dear. It just sucks its milk — an' such a grand bottle! — an' opens its eyes an' then closes 'em an' goes to sleep. 'T is no trouble at all, an' even —”

“Well indeed, well indeed!” exclaimed Jane Jenkins, cutting her short. “I've had four of 'em an' I've never known

The End of a Song

one of 'em that wasn't some trouble, that I have n't, a-screamin' an' a-kickin' an' a-droolin' from mornin' till night."

"Tut," objected Nan, her soft heart rebelling, "the baby's not cried once since it had its fill of milk — 't is an angel —"

"Boy or girl?" inquired Jane concisely. "I've forgotten which, Mair would have 'em so fast."

"A girl," answered Nan.

"Och, the pity," replied Jane Jenkins, genuine commiseration in her voice, "just think of my four! I've never ceased regrettin' them. Indeed a girl's no chance at all."

As Mrs. Jenkins the Inn ruled Bethel even as a potentate might have done, the men running before her and the women behind, it is somewhat difficult to under-

The End of a Song

stand of what at least her feminine gender had to complain.

“How are the girls?” asked Nan.

“I left ’em cleanin’ up the mud from the coffee rooms and kitchen. Aye, such havoc! I wonder did Bethel ever see anythin’ like it!”

“I dunno,” replied Nan thoughtfully, “an’ everythin’ happenin’ in such a short time.” She was watching Jane’s hand travel into her pocket. “There was the benefit concert, an’ the flood an’ cloud-burst, an’ little Tom almost drowned, an’ the hut fallin’ in an’ findin’ abidin’ places for the children.”

“An’ now,” concluded Jane Jenkins, “we must be findin’ a house for ’em too. ’Tisn’t merely payin’ a woman to care for them whatever, but ’t is raisin’ a roof over their heads an’ clothin’ an’ feedin’

The End of a Song

an' carin' for them all. Bethel has never sent a family to the workhouse, now has it?"

Nan admitted that it had not.

"Well," continued Jane, "we must get them all together under one roof, aye, that we must. 'T is no time for a concert so soon after the last. An' there's no interest for it with everythin' turned upside down, an' so I've started out again"—this with a long sigh—"with the subscription book."

Steeling herself against the pleading eyes and eager look of Nan's face, Jane pulled out the fateful little ledger.

"I dunno what Bethel is comin' to with a family of thirteen children on its hands; its rich people must help, aye, that they must!"

Little Tom's eyes grew big as he

The End of a Song

watched Mrs. Jenkins and Misser Nan and heard Jane's voice become more high and insistent. Was this lady going to punish Misser Nan?

He moved protectingly near to Nan. "She shan't whip you, Misser Nan, she shan't. You good boy, Misser Nan, you is!" He stood his ground defiantly, looking into the eyes of Mrs. Jenkins the Inn. "My Misser Nan good boy aye, 'tis."

"Well indeed," laughed Jane, touched in the tenderest place of her nature, while Nan's eyes filled with tears and she drew the child to her.

Was there anything in the world she more longed for than to help these children? Yet she knew what Shon would do when he saw that subscription book.

Mrs. Jenkins, whose love for Nan was greater than any charitable zeal, began to

The End of a Song

wish she had said nothing. But for pride's sake, so that Nan need never dream how much she saw, she must go on.

“What will ye be givin’?” she asked.

“Dear, dear, let me see!” Nan’s voice trembled and she held little Tom closer and closer.

“Shall we be takin’ the book to Shon?” inquired Jane.

“Yiss, yiss, but —”

“Or shall I be takin’ it myself, shall I?” interrupted Jane.

VIII

THE garden where Jane, her subscription book held in her hand, found Shon *had* been a peaceful place, but at the moment she stepped into it it was far from any orderliness. If you could keep your eyes above the coping stones of the garden walls it was well enough, for then you looked up the little river under trees that bordered the meadow, maple trees and the ash and wide-spreading, low-growing oaks through whose leaves the sunlight filtered and beneath whose boughs, green with moss, the stream sang a pleasant song. And above the tree-tops loomed the big round eminence of Moel Hebog, grassy except where a cliff, pitted with caves, dropped its sheer wall to the valley below. And across the stream

The End of a Song

was the highway between Bethel and Carnarvon, a broad smooth white road which, under the foothills of Snowdon, led out from the little village, and crossing and recrossing an old Roman bridlepath, sauntering around the marshy edge of a lake, always between mountains, over bridges, past inns, through other little villages in which the rooks cawed on the roofs and slate pigeons posed on the gateposts, beside a ridiculously narrow-gauge road with a fat little old woman of an engine puffing along on its tracks, past the ancient churchyard made familiar in "Aylwin," down a steep hill from which the sea and ships and a castle and a long dim mysterious island were visible, it came to a full stop at the tide's edge in the old city of Carnarvon. And no further would that road run — not even out into a pier head,

The End of a Song

which in more fashionable watering-places, with their laxer ways, a well-intentioned road would sometimes condescend to do.

But underfoot in that garden, where Shon and Jane stood, it was far from orderly, far from peaceful. The day before, this old garden had been turned into a dashing fish-pond in which probably there were no fish, but where no doubt adventurous fish, except for the topsy-turvy force of a young cloud-burst, might have wished to stay. Into this space with its cement garden walls, its hedges, its trim paths, its rows of flowers and ranks of shrubs, its hawthorn bushes, its pretty bright benches and seats, its garden-chairs and gay, parterre window-boxes, the indignant little rivers on the arm of the swashbuckling cloud-burst had rushed. Aye, indeed, and what had they not, with their conjoined

The End of a Song

forces, managed to do ! It is true that the ancient walls had stoutly held against them, and the hedges clung with all their roots to terra firma, yet the paths with a good deal of the garden real estate had slid through the straight hallway of the house into the street beyond, down the church lane and over the top of the cemetery. Its rows of flowers and ranks of shrubs were gone ; its hawthorn bushes had caught every bit of refuse — rags and papers and sticks — they could ; its pretty bright benches and seats had been smashed into kindling-wood, and its gay parterre window-boxes had been disemboweled of every flower and particle of earth they contained.

And across the stream in the road beyond, there was havoc only less complete. The ground floor of the renovated chapel with all its new carpeting and varnish

The End of a Song

swept through and through by the water, the little school-house with its bell-cot seriously damaged, the beautiful strong white road gouged out. If you had been owner of that garden and deacon of that chapel and responsible for the good condition of the roads and the school; and if a cloud had burst on the side of your mountain, as it had on the side of Shon's Moel Hebog, and carried off quantities of your lamb and mutton, unroasted and unshorn, how do you think you would have felt?

At the most peaceful moments there was some exchange of heat between Shon and Jane, and when Shon, as he stood in the garden trying to estimate the pounds and pounds sterling of his which the indignant little rivers and braggart cloud-burst had swept away, saw Jane coming, he was in

The End of a Song

no mood to sign any subscription book whatever.

“I cannot,” he argued. “Think—aye, think what this flood has done to me. In all my life, Mrs. Jenkins, there have been no such losses as these in the last twenty-four hours.”

“Imagine,” Jane was saying to herself, “the pounds that man has saved whatever.”

Aloud she said, “They’ve no roof over their heads an’ they must be provided for.”

“Aye, well, then send them to the workhouse; that Wil Morris has nothin’ to him—nothin’ at all. He’s not deservin’ to be called a man, that he is not,” grumbled Shon.

“Dear me,” replied Mrs. Jenkins the Inn, “then you’re wishin’ already to send little Tom and the baby to the workhouse!”

The End of a Song

"I said nothin' of Tom an' the baby, whatever; I'd not be wishin' to do anythin' to hurt Mrs. Roberts, an' just in this one day she thinks the world of those children."

"Well, they belong to Wil Morris."

"I dunno, I dunno but ye're right an' we must do somethin' for them," admitted Shon grudgingly.

The thought of little Tom and the baby in the workhouse had given quite a different aspect to the affair.

"'T is the workhouse or findin' 'em a place to live in an' that means money, doesn't it? An', Shon Roberts," continued Jane, boldly bearding the lion in his den, "if ye are not able to give, who will be?"

"Tut, tut," was the non-committal response. "There are many demands on me, Mrs. Jenkins, many demands. An' now

The End of a Song

these losses! Aye, I 'll do somethin', I 'll help with the rest, with the rest, but ye must remember the demands there are upon me."

"Well," said Jane, thinking that a half-loaf was better than none at all, "we're countin' on ye for generous assistance, aye, that we are."

She passed the subscription book to Shon, in which the majority of the well-to-do villagers had already entered their names and amounts.

Shon took the book and thrust it into his pocket. "I must have time for thinkin' about what I'm able to give, Mrs. Jenkins. I'll be bringin' the book to ye this afternoon."

Jane's heart rose. Before, he had always signed at once for some miserly sum. But now he was going to think about it! Well,

The End of a Song

thought Mrs. Jenkins the Inn, perhaps after all he would show himself capable of generosity. And for Nan's sake, more even than for the Morris's, she was on the point of rejoicing.

IX

TWENTY times since noon Nan had started to ask Shon what he had promised to give Mrs. Jenkins the Inn. But she had hesitated and the question was not asked. Their sitting-room downstairs had been restored to its one-time order by her own and the industry of the servant. The family treasures on the mantel-piece had been neatly rearranged, for the flood had not reached as high as that, and a new fan of tissue paper created for a fireplace ornament. Nan's eyes ran along the mantel-piece with its endless china souvenir detail, its dogs and cats and little dishes and caryatid male and female figures.

It was something in the burdened shoulders finally of one of the caryatids which

The End of a Song

gave her courage to speak to Shon as she touched his hair. "Darlin', did Jane ask ye to be helpin' the Morrisises to get a new home, aye, did she?"

"Yiss," replied Shon thoughtfully, "she did."

"What did ye think, Shon?"

"Well, I 've been a-thinkin'."

"Have ye decided to give somethin', Shon?"

"I dunno. I've not made up my mind. There 're many demands an' all these losses an' —"

"But," urged Nan, "ye will surely give somethin'; 't would never do at all not to give somethin'."

"Aye, somethin'," agreed Shon slowly, drawing the subscription book from his pocket.

"When is Jane to know?" asked Nan,

The End of a Song

trying to keep the quiver of her lips out of her voice and a big lump in her throat from choking her. "Och, Shon, 't is in sore need the Morris are!"

"Aye, I'm thinkin'."

He looked carefully through the book and paused, his eyes on the ceiling, his pencil poised in mid-air.

"Aye, they're in need, 't is true indeed."

Then he wrote in the book, closed it with a smile of satisfaction and a reassuring look for Nan, thrust it into his vest pocket, rose and said, "I'll be takin' little Tom with me over to Jane Jenkins's; the walk will do the child good."

Nan searched his face pleadingly as she kissed him good-by, not daring to ask him the one question in her heart. She loved him so! And yet at this moment she had

The End of a Song

no confidence in what he had written down in the book. Supposing that again, and at the greatest crisis this village had ever known, he should mortify her by a donation which all the poorer villagers would laugh to scorn?

Oh, it was hard! There was nothing of her own to fall back upon, not a penny. She had to bear with him. And yet it was not just that, for she adored this capable, upright, really kind-hearted husband of hers, and she knew that he loved her better than life itself. Nevertheless her position, without even the wage of a servant, was a false one. If she had borne him children would that have made it easier?

She looked out of the window. Shon was leading little Tom, about whose tiny shoulders Nan had pinned her smallest shawl. She brushed away the rebellious

The End of a Song

tears that had come, and got out her spectacles the better to see them with. Indeed, indeed he was a dear man, and her gentle heart reproved her for an instant's unkind thought of him. See how tenderly he led little Tom along, and how gravely he stooped to hear what the child said ! If only he might understand the difficulties of her position ! As long as eyes and spectacles permitted she followed those two dear figures down the narrow, paved street, past the brass door-sills and gray slate houses of their neighbors. Then Nan took off her spectacles, wiped them carefully, sighed a little at what might have been and was not, gave thanks for what was, and went upstairs to the little nameless one.

Along the street Shon and Tom continued gravely side by side, Gelert walking behind.

The End of a Song

“Och, ’t is the dog that saved the child !” exclaimed one neighbor to another.

“Aye, the same, a good-for-nothin’ beast they’ve never had enough to feed. He’s always prowlin’ around the village for somethin’ to eat. ’T is the way with dogs when their families go on the downfall, whatever.”

“Dear me,” replied the first neighbor, “a dog that ’ll save a child’s life ye can’t call good-for-nothin’, now can ye?”

“Aye, I dunno but that’s the truth,” admitted the second neighbor generously, “but ’t is a rough-lookin’ beast.”

“Dear, dear,” said neighbors further along the street who were standing by the door of Mr. Morgan the Chemist’s, “there goes the little Morris the Robertses took in !”

“Aye, an’ they say they have the small-

The End of a Song

est baby, too. I should think 't would make the old man anxious thinkin' what it costs to feed 'em."

"Tut, tut, Mrs. Roberts has a heart of gold even if he is as close as the bark on a tree."

"Is it so!" said Mr. Morgan, knowing perfectly well that it was so, but with a professional habit of keeping everything to himself.

"She loves the ground he walks on," remarked one of the group conclusively, "aye, that she does!"

Thereupon Mr. Morgan the Chemist fell to thinking of the charge of one and six for the nursing bottle, while he watched his cousin Mrs. Morgan the Shop lavishly tempting little Tom with some sweets that had escaped the flood.

Mrs. Morgan the Shop was ample and

The End of a Song

extravagant, and although her establishment was on the corner by the bridge and caught all the tourist trade, yet Mrs. Morgan did not get rich.

Shon, holding Tom by the hand, turned at right angles from the Shop to go to the Inn. He was deep in consideration of the amount he had put down for the Morrisises and did not see the Jenkins girls by the windows. There had been many losses, there had been many demands. Who could tell about the future? Ought he to have given anything at all?

Mrs. Jenkins the Inn met him at the door. "Won't ye step in, Shon?"

"Not to-day. I must be goin' home soon. 'T is late for the child."

By this time Jane's daughters had collected about them. There were four grown-up girls, of whom the oldest, hold-

The End of a Song

ing little Mali in her arms, was another Jane much like her mother; the second, Mair, as ample and rosy as her father, with little Pat's head tucked down in her very comfortable neck; the third, Lowrie, with bright hair and blue eyes seldom seen among the Welsh; and the fourth, Olwen, a romp with curly untidy hair and strong white teeth.

"Won't ye come in?" asked Jane again.

"Not to-day, Mrs. Jenkins. I've just brought ye the book, that is all."

"I hope," said Jane, looking at him without fear, "that ye have given all ye could!"

"Aye, more 'n I ought to give. There are many losses an' many demands, many demands, but I've given, Mrs. Jenkins, yiss, I've given beyond my means.

The End of a Song

“Come, little man,” continued Shon, “we must be goin’, aye, that we must. ’T is bed-time for you, an’ Misser Nan is waitin’.”

After a decorous interval of speeding the parting guest, the girls rushed into the house after their mother, all demanding in one breath, “Mam, show us what ’d he give!”

Mrs. Jenkins the Inn, walking into her own sitting-room, replied, “Do be still till I get on my spectacles.”

When Olwen handed her the spectacles Mrs. Jenkins would have been loath to tell how her heart beat with expectation. Then the girls heard an exasperated “Och!” and saw the book drop to their mother’s lap and her face turn white and then flame red.

Lowrie of the bright hair and blue

The End of a Song

eyes, who had read yellow novels left behind by tourists, was sure her mother was going to faint.

“Who ever heard of Mam’s faintin’!” said Olwen.

“Dear me, dear me, dear me,” Mrs. Jenkins was repeating indignantly, “that Nan should have such a husband!”

“What was it, Mam?”

The mother passed the book to them; she did not trust herself to name the sum.

“Och, the miser!” said the oldest daughter.

“The skinflint!” cried out Mair in a big voice.

“An’ to think *he* dared to put down such a donation!” added Lowrie.

“Well indeed,” announced Olwen, “if he were my dad I’d duck him in the river, that I would whatever!”

The End of a Song

“Don’t ye mind, Mam,” said Jane and Mair together, hugging their little Morris protectingly.

“Tut,” answered Mrs. Jenkins, rousing from her state of collapse, “’t is nothin’ at all to me, but to think of havin’ such a husband!”

X

THERE seemed to be no corner in Bethel into which the Morris fortunes had not penetrated and where the future of the Morrises was not discussed in all its details. Mr. and Mrs. Coach, who had taken in Gwynfryn and liked that little boy very much, nevertheless looked with covetous eyes on Tom, whom they liked better and could not possess even temporarily. Young Mr. Glyn Edwards, who had welcomed Lowrie and her father, baked the most delectable scones and cakes for that little girl of six and shut the oven door on many a thought of the baby girl of his own he was to have some day — which as both he and Mrs. Glyn hoped the same thing was likely to prove a se-

The End of a Song

curity in blessings. Mrs. Morgan the Shop, out of largesse in past glories in groceries — certainly she could not be said to have any stock at present — had taken in two hungry mouths to feed, Deborah's and Robyn's. And for no particular reason, so far as Mr. Morgan the Chemist, her cousin, could see, the "shop" was in a continual state of merriment. Even every fresh discovery of some lost article, perhaps by this time largely in solution, was occasion for peals of laughter. That was the way with some people, thought Mr. Morgan the Chemist, they hadn't sense enough to know when they were parting with hard-earned shillings.

At sight of the recovered article, Mrs. Morgan would exclaim, "What is it?"

"Aye, well, 't is," said Deb, while water dripped from a black end, "'t is —"

The End of a Song

“Tith a thick of licorith from Mither Morgan,” lisped Robyn.

“Dear people,” chuckled Mrs. Morgan, “escaped !”

“’T is a banana,” continued Deborah, whereupon more shouts of laughter came from the shop.

When Mr. Morgan stepped over to inquire what the joke was, as there really was n’t any joke he could n’t see at all what they had been laughing about ; and what was more he could n’t see at all that good humor alone was sufficient to make people laugh, and that, perhaps, was because he did n’t have any, except the kind that smiles and rubs its hands at the same time.

“Tut,” commented Mrs. Morgan, still shaking and her lips pursed into merriment over this general liquidation of her

The End of a Song

property, “a potato is the only thing — aye, the only — ye can depend upon knowin’ when ye see it. But these fancy fruits and jells, Mr. Morgan, and Chinese rices and Indian teas — just look at the state they ’re in ! Aye, a potato ’s a potato to the end of time, for all the world like the Rock of Gibraltar. Next to the royal bonds ’t is the safest investment.”

At this Mr. Morgan, having slaked his curiosity, retired to his own shop, wondering. But his cousin and the children went on laughing — just as if that sort of thing would put shillings into their pocket ! — which very much increased their appetites for dinner and so added to their financial losses. Their midday meal was as gay as if there were not a trouble in the world. To sit down with two dear children, seven and eight years old, who were in a state

The End of a Song

of wild excitement over a bit of lamb and some freshly boiled potatoes and crusty bread, makes a repast fit for a king. The very clatter of their knives and forks was music to Mrs. Morgan's ears.

Up on the hillside at Farmer Jones's Howell and Jemima romped over the pastures with the joyous collies who were leaping in the air and barking from sheer rapture of wind and hillside and sunlight. At Brynhyfryd there was abundance of milk and delicious cheese and fresh butter and the golden-brown loaves which were baked for Brynhyfryd by the Jones's son-in-law, Glyn Edwards. And there were visits from Lowrie, and cakes done up in a little poke, and romps to the very summit of Craig Wen with the frightened sheep and the joyous collies, and rooks sailing about in the air like blown leaves.

The End of a Song

And for Megan and Rhydderch, the two eldest, there was an orderly comfortable home with the schoolmaster who was a friend of Mrs. Jenkins the Inn.

To the Morrises the flood thus far, indeed, had been only a benefaction, and it may be to Bethel, too, for to scatter abroad so much young life must bring its increase in light hearts and laughter, more potent for health and joy than any nostrum sold at the Bethel Pill Depot. Tut, tut, Wil Morris, look on yourself as a benefactor collateral with the flood and hold up your head as a personage who had conveyed upon Bethel the priceless bounty of joyous childhood ! Hold up your head, man, the possession of such jewels as lie treasured in the hearts of twelve, untroubled children makes a man rich ! What, would you exchange them for a row of glittering la-

The End of a Song

beled bottles, however priceless their contents, or for a four-in-hand with jingling harness and smartly painted coach, or for a bank account, however large, in Portmadoc? Hold up your head, Wil Morris, for your children, though they may be ragged and not very clean, are comely and strong, and innocent as the love in which they were born. Aye, Wil Morris, as old Nan said, they are grand babies.

But the week after the flood, when they were to move into the new cottage secured for them by the efforts of Mrs. Jenkins the Inn, Wil Morris did not hold up his head. The cottage, it is true, was not precisely "new." That word implies a state which did not exist in Bethel. The human beings in Bethel were always the new element, not the masonry. A new cottage in that village meant simply that new ten-

The End of a Song

ants were moving in. The Morris cottage was no exception to the rule, as its great tods of ivy, hung on wall and roof so thickly that the house could scarcely see out of its windows, showed, and its ancient paving-stones and low doorway attested.

To Wil Morris it had suggested only fresh troubles. Yet it was a place where children were certain to be happy, and about which the little Morrises, as they were flocking in all day long, were as jolly as grigs. There were three wonderful rooms in it: a kitchen, — a motherly kitchen, — a bedroom and a loft. Think, three rooms for only thirteen people! Outside there was a brook that buried itself as deep as it could in a lush meadow, and mysterious gray woods behind the cottage, and a “cut” where a narrow-gauge railway had started to come through

The End of a Song

and then changed its mind and doubled on itself like a rabbit; and a hill with part of a castle keep still on it, and Bethel not much more than a stone's throw off, and standing in the doorway the slender figure of Mrs. Glyn Edwards, who was to come in twice a day to care for the children till Mrs. Jenkins could make some permanent arrangement. Yet with all these blessings Wil Morris had entered the cottage sadly.

XI

"WHERE we goin', Misser Nan, chapel?" asked little Tom.

"Dear people, chapel," replied Nan, fastening his blouse, and trying to smile. "No, we're goin' to take you an' baby home to father, darlin'. You'll be glad to see dad, won't you?"

Tom looked doubtful, his face puckering, his lower lip trembling. "Home?" he said, vaguely. He still had a picture of the terrible waters rushing over all that he had known as home.

"Aye, darlin', home. Dad has a new home."

"Can't I stay here, please, Misser Nan?" asked Tom very quietly, putting his arms

The End of a Song

about Mrs. Roberts's neck. "I do lub you so, Misser Nan."

There was a lump in Nan's throat, while Gelert wagged his tail and Shon held the baby wrapped up on his knee. How could she ever get along without him? He had found his way, child-like, into the very centre of her heart, and Nan marveled that anything could be so dear.

As there was no answer forthcoming, Tom hugged Nan tighter and whispered, "I like you, Misser Nan, bery much, I do. Don't cake me away."

For answer to this the words caught altogether in Nan's throat and two big tears rushed pell mell down her old cheeks.

Tom looked to Gelert for advice in this crisis, and then he said aloud, "Lemme kiss you, Misser Nan."

"Dear, dear!" exclaimed Shon, notic-

The End of a Song

ing Nan's tears, "ye must n't. We'll go to see the child every day. Aye, the walk will do us good. Come, Tom, let Mrs. Roberts put on your coat."

The child flared up, "That's Misser Nan, it is, that's *my* Misser Nan. I'm her Morris Tom, I am."

Half-laughing, Nan caught the boy to her and held him close, saying, "Darlin'" over and over again.

She wondered whether there would ever be any solace so dear as this child's certainty that she was all the world? Or any days so happily busy as these last ten had been with baths to give and cut fingers to bind up and tears to stanch and sweets to provide and lullabies to sing? Even Tom's naughtiness had made the days precious with human interest. After he had been bad, Nan could feel him now, all arms,

The End of a Song

hugging and kissing and petting her, and saying rather sheepishly and unwillingly, "I 'se sorry, Misser Nan, I is," and preferring not to have any further reference made to his naughtiness. Who would there be any more to frisk around in the garden after tea, rolling over and over like a sportive kitten, while her husband sat by quietly smiling and lifting his cup?

"Come, come," said Shon gruffly, not daring to look up from the morsel on his knee, "we must be goin'." In his own heart he was saying "Dear me," dolefully enough as he heard Nan sighing.

They went out on to the street, Nan leading Tom, and Shon carrying the little nameless one, in both hearts the same unspoken thought, the wish that these two children might be, might have been theirs. Shon wondered who would ever be so good a fish-

The End of a Song

ing companion as little Tom. He could see him now on their last expedition, leaning over the fish that had just been caught and saying, "Lemme pet 'em, Misser Shon," until Shon had had to let him pet the wet slimy fish, and the child had done it in his dear gentle way. Then suddenly overcome with his own daring, Tom had cried out, "You won't let dat fiss eat me, Misser Shon, will you?"

"Och, the world's value!" thought Shon now, walking along as quietly as a woman with the little nameless one held in his arms.

They were approaching Mrs. Morgan the Shop who stood in her doorway, her hands under her apron. For once there was no smile on Mrs. Morgan's face.

"'T is a fine day indeed, Mrs. Morgan," said Shon, by way of greeting an old friend

The End of a Song

he liked as much as he feared Mrs. Jenkins the Inn.

“Aye,” replied Mrs. Morgan doubtfully, looking up at the sky from which certainly an unclouded sun shone forth, “aye, it may be.”

Nan’s lips were still trembling from the emotion she had not been able to control, and she longed to throw herself on Mrs. Morgan’s ample bosom.

“Have your children left?” inquired Shon, with masculine attack upon the subject uppermost in all thoughts.

“Aye, Deb and Robyn went this hour ago, an’ ’t is lonely it is for me,” and underneath her apron Mrs. Morgan’s two plump hands wrung each other in a hard grip.

“We’re takin’ ours back, ye see,” said Shon, in explanation of what both women

The End of a Song

would rather not have had mentioned at all.

“Aye, I see. Here, little man, is a sweet for ye. Take it, ’t is all Mrs. Morgan has left.”

She made this gift the excuse to lay a friendly hand on Nan’s arm — a hand that dropped finally to the top of Gelert’s faithful head. Her woman’s heart understood so well why Nan’s big eyes looked piteously large, and her cheeks somewhat pale, and her lips tremulous.

All the way on their pilgrimage to the new home Nan was grateful for that friendly touch, for it comforted her as nothing else in the day could comfort. At least one person understood. As they drew near the new home, little Tom lagged.

“See the grand house!” said Nan, pointing it out to him.

The End of a Song

"Aye, d' want to go!" was all Tom replied, a break in his treble voice.

"Dear, dear, what a beautiful house it is!" added Shon.

"D' want to go in," Tom cried as he reached the doorway, where all the children were clustered, shouting their greetings. "You won't leab me, Misser Nan, you won't leab me?"

"I must, darlin'," answered Nan, nodding and smiling heroically.

"Dear Misser Nan, won't you wait ford me?" he wailed.

"Aye, darlin', Misser Nan will wait till her boy comes to visit her again."

Tom considered a moment, then he said to Gelert, putting his arms about the dog's neck, "She good Misser Nan." This friend, even as Mrs. Morgan the Shop had understood Nan, would understand him.

The End of a Song

At this instant Nan would have given everything she possessed for a share in the confident love which little Tom, as a last comfort, was giving to Gelert. If only she might have him for her very own, to do for him always!

As they turned to go, Tom clung to her, tears on the verge of spilling over.

“Wid you cake me wid you, Misser Nan?” he begged again.

“Misser Nan can’t, but she’ll come to you soon, darlin’.”

“Soon?” Tom straightened up. That was not so bad after all.

When she and Shon reached the road once more, the child was standing apart from the others, one hand on Gelert, the other waving a brave farewell, and the little voice calling, “Good-by! Had a good time, Misser Nan, had a good time.”

XII

NAN's heart was like the inside of a deep fir tree. Within were spaces through which you could see to hills beyond and bright areas of sky and clouds that moved across the blue; within, too, were nests woven in years past and last year's nests and those built with infinite care by little tenants who sang their rental a thousand times a day; and, also, in the deep branches of this tree which the faintest stir of air made to sing, were downy feathers from little things that had plumed themselves and flown away; and here, too, were garnered leaves from other trees blown to this shelter by some wild wind. When the wind touched this tree, not only the singing branches but all within stirred, conscious

The End of a Song

of one life, little nests where warmth had been or was, like some succoring love; and tiny feathers light as the most aerial of thoughts; and the sharp sound of old leaves which were as the piteous noise of memories.

And no one who had once seen this tree with all its life within, or heard it sing more sweetly than any choir of heavenly angels imagined by the mind of man, ever forgot it. It found its way song-wise into your heart, and in dreary days you went back to the memory of the sweet music of that little tree, and in days of peace you visited it again and again. You found that it had entered your life like light or sunshine or a warm sheltering wind or a glimpse of the beyond, and that forevermore it was with you. Sometimes people shut their windows against the music and sunshine and

The End of a Song

wind of this little tree, but before long the windows were flung wide, for in Bethel young and old, the rebellious and the wise worshiped the beauty they had found in the voice and eyes and deeds of old Nan.

No one ever stopped to think that Nan was as helpless as a child. Hers was never the word to decide questions important to Bethel — Mrs. Jenkins the Inn's was often; — she never affixed values, or rectified mistakes, or held her head proudly, or apparently had any power whatsoever. She could not even dispense charity in the sense of being an almoner, and yet something there was in her which all sought, which Jane Jenkins cherished as nothing else in the world, which made the light of day for Shon, which brought Mrs. Morgan the Shop and other villagers to their door-sills,

The End of a Song

which made the young men touch their caps and the girls speak gently, which brought Gelert to lie on her skirt, and which made little Tom cling to her more even than to the poor burdened mother who had never had time to caress him. I wonder what that something was?

On this morning, the day after Tom and the little nameless one had been taken home, the deep places in Nan's heart were greatly stirred — even agitated. All night long she had lain wide awake by Shon's side, puzzling how she could live without the child who had confided himself so utterly to her care. There was the baby, too, and she wanted her sorely; but somehow Tom, with his instant, trustful love, she needed more. Would Shon understand if she told him? Could she ever make him understand what even at sixty-six — and Nan

The End of a Song

was old for sixty-six, some said because she had no children, some because she had Shon — had awakened in her which she could never still again, that could no more be hushed to its sleep than a hungry child! She was afraid to try. But in one way at least she must express herself: she must be able to help little Tom. And to do for the child she must have the means. And there she was back once more to the always present problem of a penny.

She waited till Shon had finished his breakfast. How many wives have waited thus, perhaps indignant within but helpless without, till an auspicious moment gave them a chance to ask for what was theirs by every common right of burden-bearing, labor, interest! All through the breakfast hour Shon had made it harder and harder for Nan to come to the point

The End of a Song

by his enumeration of losses. The cloud-burst had gutted out one whole meadow on the side of Moel Hebog, taking with it grazing lands, sheep, sheep walls and what not; the plantation of trees at the foot of the mountain, near the edge of the river, had been damaged to the extent of fifty pounds or more; he had had news of the loss of a cargo of slate in the storm which had raged on the sea just beyond the mountains; and there had been constant losses in the quarries of late.

“Takin’ it all in all, Nan,” he said, “we ’re poorer by a thousand pounds.”

Nan knew very well that that was a big sum for Bethel; indeed it might represent the entire capital of half a dozen of their most prosperous families. But what was it to Shon? Nought but a drop in the bucket of a fortune he had collected in scores of

The End of a Song

patient industrious ways. Little ruffled protests were stirring within Nan ; it may be that these emotions, had Nan had children of her own, would have grown into an indignant storm of demand, that Shon would have been forced to make her lot financially dignified. But as it was she felt not wrath, but exasperation, and an unchanged resolve to ask for pocket money. Her gentle mouth became tense, almost willful, as she studied Shon's long astute face, with its kindly eyes and look of shrewd insight. She did n't care, that she did n't, she was saying in her heart like some naughty child ; she would have her penny to spend the same, aye, she would if it were to be got by any means whatever. There were a score of things little Tom needed and must have.

“ Aye, Shon, 't is a pity to lose so much

The End of a Song

at one time, but the children are needin' many things an' —”

“An' what?” demanded Shon, his expression showing not a little surprise at this cavalier treatment of his fortunes, this readiness on Nan's part to talk when he had still so much to say.

Aye, indeed, had Nan ever done anything but listen while Shon talked endlessly about every detail of his business, his personal, his official life! She had listened, listened, listened, till it had ceased to occur to Shon — if he had ever thought of it, and I am not sure that he had — that Nan, too, might like a chance to talk herself out. After all was she not very lonely? Who had there ever been to whom she might tell every interest and experience of her life and heart?

Now, after the long custom of a patient

The End of a Song

audience, Shon was not a little amazed to have his interests dismissed in such a fashion.

“An’,” continued Nan, her eyes filling with tears, “an’, Shon dear, I must have money, aye, I must!”

“For what?” asked Shon judicially.

“I said for the children, for Tom.”

“Well, what for Tom, then?”

“Och, he’s needin’ a cap an’ a pair of pants.”

Shon reached into his pocket and there lay in the palm of his hand a heap of silver coin. He separated two shillings for the pants and six pence for the cap.

“Two and six,” he said, handing it to Nan.

“But, Shon,” objected Nan, “may n’t I have a few s’illin’s a week—just a few till there’s no need any more?”

The End of a Song

“Tut, tut,” replied Shon testily, “have I ever refused you anythin’, Nan? Ask when ye want it. Is there anythin’ more now?” he asked, the silver still lying on his open palm.

Nan turned her head away quickly and answered that there was not. And for some reason, she did not know why, she would rather have died than have taken another penny. It was then, after all these years, that the first wild storm broke upon Nan, and beat the little tree hither and yon, and scattered the sheltered leaves and downy feathers, and smote the nests old and new, and turned the song of the little tree, which had always been like harp and wind singing together, into sounds of tumult.

XIII

NAN waited only until Shon had gone out to inspect his quarries and his farms, and then she put on her everyday bonnet which had two dilapidated white roses on one side, and two somewhat wrecked-looking black roses on the other. After that she drew on a pair of shabby gloves and went forth. She meant to know what it was her husband had given the Morrisises, what he had entered on the subscription book.

Not only would he not trust her with the money she needed so much, and he could so amply afford to supply, but also he would not even tell her the amounts of his subscriptions. She had a right to know, and she would know. And if again

The End of a Song

he had taken advantage of her, if again he had made them both a butt of ridicule because of his stinginess, she would — here there was a loud wailing sound from the poor storm-beaten little tree — well, she knew what she would do. And you could not doubt, if you had seen her hurrying towards the Inn, that she would do it. But if — and here the little tree was still a moment and then swung into a long sigh — if he had given generously, she must find some way to make him understand that for all his love, he was not treating her rightly. She could hear him now, that first evening after the cloudburst, as they had stood over the little nameless one, exclaiming, “The world’s value!” Aye, truly, Bethel might laugh as it pleased, but she knew that to him, too, that little one was as much the

The End of a Song

“world’s value” as to any other person in all the town. Here the fir-tree sang out one of its harp notes, just the beginning of a long familiar melody, to Nan the sweetest song that was ever sung.

Yet if Jane Jenkins had not protected them by a friendship in which there had never been a single word spoken that could have subjected Nan to idle comment among others, there is no telling to what extent they might have become in their miserliness the laughing-stock of Bethel. Doubtless he loved her better than his sheep and slate and golden coin, yet her pride, her feelings, her sense of responsibility were never considered. Oh, she could not endure it, it was all so unnecessary, so humiliating! Why had she never gone out to do her marketing as other

The End of a Song

women did? Why must Shon always parley with the fruit and vegetable venders who came to their doors? Why did he pay the servant, and the man who came in the season to care for their garden?

The little tree was moaning and tossing and bringing not a note of comfort to Nan, not even letting her dream that in all Bethel there was no one so much loved, so much sought after, so much idolized. Aye, well, and to think that Nan was never to know these things, to think that she would never dream of the fact that she was more powerful than all the deacons and the minister and the schoolmaster and every one of Shon's golden coins rolled up together! Well, indeed, 't is a strange world in which verily the right sort of virtue is never its own reward, but just somebody else's good fortune. And there are moments when

The End of a Song

even a six-winged angel would find no comfort in such a thought.

The little shabby black roses and the little wilted white roses on Nan's bonnet which—and there were all-told only four of them, with not a single petal renewed in the ten years of their life—were the only objects in Nan's apparel that even suggested lightness, seemed to find this a comfortless moment as Nan entered the Inn courtyard. Their mistress did n't smile or talk very much as she greeted the daughters who went to call their mother.

Jane Jenkins, when she came in, saw that something had happened to Nan. She knew every expression of her friend's face better than she knew the words of her hymnal, and that is asserting a good deal of a Welsh woman.

The End of a Song

All Nan said was, with an attempt at a smile, "Jane, I'm wantin' to see the subscription book."

"Dear people!" exclaimed Jane.

Another time she might have put her off, but there was a look to-day in Nan's eyes which would bear no refusal.

"Aye, I'm wishin' to see it now."

"Well, indeed," agreed Mrs. Jenkins, turning to go for the book and at the same time calling away the daughters as one might call off so many troublesome puppies.

When Nan looked at that book, thought Mrs. Jenkins, no one should be looking at her. She wished, anyway, that it were at the bottom of Bala Lake, with a good deal else that might be there to advantage. She did not specify what, but she knew very well what it was.

The End of a Song

“Indeed,” she said, bringing in the book reluctantly, “I ’d not be lookin’ at it. ’T is all scrawled over, whatever. I can answer any questions ye ’re wishin’ to ask.”

Mrs. Jenkins was prepared for a lie if only Mrs. Roberts would ask the question she had in mind.

“No, no,” replied Nan, taking the book and pulling off her gloves. “’T is what ye raised for the Morrisises I wish to see for myself.”

She was already running the leaves through nervously, and Jane Jenkins, manager, martinet, field marshal, turned her back on her and busied her fingers with the plants growing in the windows, coming on well now even though the flood had left them nothing but roots.

She could not bear to see a line alter on Nan’s face. She could remember at that

The End of a Song

moment, and it was a good forty years ago, the first lines of care she had noticed under Nan's eyes, and how her own heart had beat over those tell-tale wrinkles. Nan was married then and she herself was still the village schoolmistress, and was still to come and go in Bethel for ten years more, with Nan's cares and life deepest and single in her heart. That was before successful Mr. Jenkins, who knew a good wife as quickly as he knew a good inn, married her. Jane had felt that she must have Mr. Jenkins, and she had built on an addition for him, so to speak, while Nan's dwelling was left even as it had been. Mrs. Jenkins had made an admirable wife, loyal and efficient; Mr. Jenkins's addition was well-lighted and heated and never forgotten. Each baby as it had come had bound them closer and closer together in

The End of a Song

those ties which are discipline in all unselfishness and loving-kindness, and yet Nan had stayed in the very core of Jane's heart as some first seen face will stay forever in the very centre of one's memory.

Mrs. Jenkins the Inn had never seen Nan's eyes as they were to-day. It was that Shon, of that she was very sure. Och, thought Jane, what a man ! He had been, by the way, the only man she had never been able to manage. Then had followed more wicked thoughts of Bala Lake and its spacious depths, in which there rang mysterious bells from submerged churches, and in which there lay other lands and towns, presumably real estate where Shon would prove a desirable tenant.

Snip, snip, snip went her fingers breaking off the dead leaves of the geraniums. Would Nan ever make a sound ? Dear

The End of a Song

people, why didn't she say something? How could she ever look around if Nan didn't say something? How endure the piteous expression in those eyes which would have discovered what it was Shon had contributed towards the Morrisises?

Indeed Nan *had* discovered. Her little old finger had run down the page: the schoolmaster, a pound; Mr. Jenkins the Inn, two pounds, and so it went till she came to Shon's handwriting, "Mr. and Mrs. Roberts, 7 shillings." Yes, Nan had discovered. And without even the least little sigh the color had fled from her cheeks, the book slipped noiseless to her lap, and the poor forlorn little roses which had been seasoned by years of hard wear and weather, had drooped with their mistress's limp head against the big chair back. Such penalties do you pay for a

The End of a Song

song-wise life, such punishment do you get for a love that loses itself, such forfeiture of consciousness for a heart that knows not its life from that of another's. And that is why Nan, because her poor little breath came strangely and her eyes were closed, did not say something to Jane Jenkins the Inn, who was waiting for her to speak.

XIV

WHEN Mr. Morgan the Chemist spoke English, as he was speaking it for the benefit of a tourist who had stepped in to replenish his medicine case, he did it something like this: "Och tear, yiss, that was a fery pad flood! 'T is a wonder we wur n't all tead. Yiss, hur come like any other flood, put a gloud-purst, a pum gloud-purst, come on top of hur. Till that gloud-purst come the coats on the mountains wur safe, an' the people in the falleys wur safe, put after that gloud-purst come there wur nothin' that cood God cared for. — Yiss, mum, an' a half-penny worth of pennyroyal. — Aye, that gloud-purst play the fery tephil with eferythin'! A cood flood no one coes to mind; hur

The End of a Song

comes an' comes an' then hur stops when eferyone say hur will stop, I will warrant you. But that gloud-purst! There ain't no worts to tescrive that. Hur run pang into eferythin', that hur tid, into the pridge an' preak hur in two, an' into the toors of gottages. Och, such a fery pad gloud-purst, a pum gloud-purst. In Mrs. Shenkins' shudgement, hur say — "

In the midst of his misplaced *t*'s and *p*'s and *c*'s and his Yiddish *j*'s, Mr. Morgan the Chemist was arrested by one of Mrs. Jenkins's own daughters who said quickly, without any deference to the presence of the tourist, "Sal volatile, if you please, Mr. Morgan!"

There was no mistaking that inflection. Mr. Morgan dropped his mutables and his tourist, and produced a small phial of sal volatile which was seized and borne off un-

The End of a Song

paid for, with only a hasty "Thank you" as receipt. Mr. Morgan's eyes followed the girl's running step all the way across the street and into the Inn courtyard, then he turned to the tourist and said,

"Mrs. Shenkins' the Inn's taughter."

But if you can endure any more of this English as she is spoken by the Welsh, I cannot. To my way of thinking it is a pity that a half-educated Welshman ever tries to speak English at all. His own language is so much more beautiful, so much more flexible for expression. One word of Welsh often conveys half a dozen of the English. There is no English that will translate the poetry of Welsh, which is like a lullaby to ears that are tired of the harsh consonants of our Saxon speech. It is peace incarnate to hear their quiet voices, their gentle inflections and pretty greetings. It is right

The End of a Song

that they should play the harp, for that music is in their very words; it is right that theirs should be among the most beautiful singers in all the world, for even their unsung speech is melody.

You may not have believed that Nan's voice was as beautiful as I have told you, yet I have told you only the truth. That voice at sixty-six was not only marvelous in its bird-like sweetness and purity, but a few years ago when Nan was eighty she sang for me again, and there was still youth and freshness and passion in the old songs she sang. I can see and hear her now as she sat in the big chair, a young man standing beside her,—see again how she threw back her dear old head and closed her eyes and sang and sang and sang songs from memory which she thought I might never have heard.

The End of a Song

And it was thus, in the big chair where she sat, she had sung many times for Mrs. Jenkins the Inn, when Jane turned to break the dead leaves from her geraniums. Certainly when Mrs. Jenkins finally looked around again she was surprised. Nan had sat in that chair many times, but she had never been white like that before. It took only the shake of a lamb's tail to summon Mair and send for the sal volatile. And it was on Mair's rosy face that Nan's eyes first opened.

"Aye, that'll do, Mair," said Mrs. Jenkins who was fanning Nan vigorously, "I'll call ye if I'm needin' ye. Don't let any one come in."

"Dear, dear, what is it?" whispered Nan.

Then her hands felt the book which still lay in her lap. It was true—all of it!

The End of a Song

“Ye’ve felt a bit faint, Nan,” said Jane, quietly smoothing back the moist thin hair from her forehead. “’T is nothin’ much. There, there, ye’ve overtaxed. Ye’ve been grievin’ for little Tom, now have n’t ye?”

This excuse would do very well to evade discussing the subscription book. Even if Jane Jenkins did not live her life song-wise she knew what it meant to live it so. You must admit that to have had Jane’s understanding was not a little thing, for in this world what would poets do if they had no readers, and singers if they had no audience, and the grief-stricken if they had no sympathy?

“Aye, grievin’. I was awake all last night thinkin’ of the child,” admitted Nan gratefully.

The long-tried, long-loved confidence

The End of a Song

in Jane Jenkins was bringing her peace. She knew and she knew that Jane knew what part the tell-tale book had played in this little scene of weakness. But Jane would never speak of it, that she would n't.

XV

“SICK, ye say?”

“Aye, the little girl Lowrie; the child that was with Mrs. Glyn Edwards.”

Mr. Morgan the Chemist touched his scales with the exquisite delicacy of performing the finest of scientific experiments. He broke a peppermint in two and once more fingered the balance. He quartered the mint, and the weight was exact. He could again give himself to conversation about the follies of his neighbors.

“’T was the little lass, Mrs. Roberts; her father was with her, ye may remember.”

“Yiss, yiss,” assented Nan. “Is she very ill? Och, the poor child!”

“Aye, she is ill, she is ill.”

The End of a Song

Mr. Morgan the Chemist stopped there ; it was not professional etiquette for him to say how ill, and as anyway he was not sure just how ill Lowrie was, it was wise for him not to mention that fact either. For him not to know such a thing seemed as disastrous as for the Encyclopedia Britannica to fail the English public. But he knew that she was ill enough so that it was considered necessary to fetch the physician from Portmadoc. Under ordinary circumstances Mr. Morgan himself served as leech. He felt that it was the part of wisdom to discredit somewhat the extraordinary circumstances. He did not believe in scares.

“Do you know what it is ails the child?” asked Nan, the shabby pair of black and white roses leaning eagerly over her eyes.

The End of a Song

“Well, ’t is a fever.”

It would n’t be professional etiquette to mention what fever, and as he had not been informed what fever it was, he rejoiced in a vocation which could both shelter him from curiosity and line his nest handsomely.

“I was on my way over there,” added Nan, whose own profession, song-wise, did not oblige her to keep any secrets, and whose eyes were big with open sorrow. “Poor Wil Morris! If ’t is n’t one thing with him, Mr. Morgan, ’t is another. Please put up some lime drops for the child — they ’re coolin’. Aye, charge both, if you please. A s’illin’ ye say?”

With the two little bags in her hands Nan went out on to the street. Perhaps without realizing it, she was stepping out into a rather dubious freedom of financial

The End of a Song

independence, won at a cost she had never paid before.

On Mr. Morgan's accounts, many articles had followed the nursing bottle. Since Nan had seen the record of Shon's contribution to the Morrisises, no day in the week had she gone empty-handed to little Tom. Yet Shon had not been asked for a penny.

In the dear old eyes always so fresh and full of life, trouble showed itself: the sharp strife of a conscience at internal warfare; the shock to the habit of full confidence in Shon which she had observed at all costs through a whole lifetime of married trust.

There had been many days when Shon would have tried the patience of a saint, when he schemed and skimped and planned; when his one thought had

The End of a Song

seemed to be to get the most for the least, when his one desire had been to outwit his neighbors—never a process that makes others love or trust you. But despite it all Nan had loved and trusted him. She regretted the methods—perhaps Shon was scheming for some really good object—and tried to look beyond his way of doing a thing to the end itself, which was sure to be honorable. There were days when the pettiness of Shon's calculations would have driven another woman frantic, when the necessity for "managing" the man she loved best, of making excuses for his abominable ways of handling his affairs, would have soured the temper and destroyed the trust of most women.

But in Nan's heart, where so many things sheltered, there was always Pity who said over and over again, "He does n't

The End of a Song

understand; if he did he would n't do it so." And this Pity trailed the garments, worn it is true, and old as herself, of all loveliness of love and song, for all the world like Nan herself. In her footsteps, too, were beautiful flowers, and about her the jargoning of many blithe songs. She and Nan together had always been able to tune up under the most adverse circumstances. They had often sounded like a little orchestra of birds singing—certain that the sunshine and the grass and the wind and the trees were paradise enough. Dear, dear, how those little birds could sing! The thrushes and the sparrows and the larks, and when they had done there was a nightingale or so and a family of night-jars to maintain the music, so that twenty-four hours were just globe-wise a song's orbit.

The End of a Song

Now what had happened I do not know. I only know what I saw with my own eyes and from the very beginning of this story that's all I have tried to tell you. Maybe Tom's "You good boy, Misser Nan, aye, you is" had made Nan vain, or perhaps "I'se Misser Nan's Morris Tom" had done something to Pity. All I know is that not only Nan was behaving in an extraordinary fashion for her, but that likewise Pity, who was a perfectly respectable somewhat elderly female, was proceeding to forget herself exceedingly. Indeed her white hair was mussed and her face was red, and she raised her voice when she spoke above a pitch becoming to elderly females who have their reputations to consider. And I saw that whereas *she* spoke—and said altogether too much—Nan was moody and would say very little at all,

The End of a Song

so that Shon several times in the course of the Liverpool *Daily* had lowered that paper and scrutinized his other half whom he was loyally disposed to think his better half. Was that half ill? Had anything happened? Was she grieving for little Tom? Could they do anything about that? Weren't women a little inexplicable anyway? Had they or had n't they some hidden power of creating an atmosphere, a sort of—what? Was n't a man to be pitied who, having lived with a woman forty years in which nothing ever had gone wrong, suddenly woke up to the fact that without any rhyme or reason something *was* wrong? And if when you asked her, she said nothing was the matter, what could you do? You could n't unpin her the way you would a baby and search for the causes of the vexing trou-

The End of a Song

bles, now could you? Aye, what in the name of all the Adams and Eves was a man to do? And so having lowered the Liverpool *Daily Shon* raised it again and continued to read Mr. Bowditch of Manchester on the ancient marriage ceremonies of the Britons somewhat like this: 'The ancient Druids — *she is n't well, aye, that she can't be* — whose opinions are so little known — *she's not speakin' like herself whatever* — and whose ceremonies and religious rites are at present so imperfectly understood — *have I been doin' anythin' to grieve her? Och, these women, but she's the apple of my eye* — never displayed their attention to the exigencies — *Jane Jenkins, now I wonder!* — of society and to the conveniences of private — *Jane Jenkins might have a finger in this pie* — life, in a more laudable manner, than — *Jane Jen-*

The End of a Song

*kins, Jane Jenkins, Jane Jenkins, why can't she let things alone, always meddlin' in others' affairs an'—*in the institutions they introduced respecting the matrimonial union of the two sexes.

So much for Mr. Bowditch on the Druids. With an oath, none the less potent because unspoken, this elderly deacon of the Chapel dropped Mr. Bowditch of Manchester and the Liverpool *Daily* as a conspiracy of nonsensical English, and in Welsh frankly faced what, in a long life, was his first domestic situation. And while he was facing it, Nan had quietly left the room without any remark, and gone out the front door and down the street to Mr. Morgan the Chemist's.

XVI

ALTHOUGH the cottage into which the Morrisises had moved was not palatial, yet to them it seemed such. There was a large kitchen and an ample ground-floor room and above these a loft where preceding tenants had always slept, so to speak, *en famille*, and where it may be all the little Morrisises might have had their rest and their dreams if Mr. and Mrs. Morris had not multiplied them so rapidly. Physical geography, however, would not allow thirteen people, even packed like herrings, to sleep in that loft. Wil Morris, therefore, with some of the smaller children, slept in state in the big ground-floor bedroom.

From the outside, Glanaber, for that

The End of a Song

was the name of the cottage, looked very much as it had in the days of Elizabeth. The low doorway with thatch above it two feet thick, and ivy clustered about the lintel, drooped over a yard paved with small cobblestones. Against the white-washed and ivy-covered walls of the house leaned tall fuchsias and other bushes. Inside, the kitchen was like the warm heart of some comfortable old woman. It invited you to come in and sit awhile—wherever you pleased, for, with the experience of old age, it was liberal and patient and had provided for almost every vagary in the mind of man. If you did n't like the sun shining through the lattice windows and luxuriant fuchsia bushes, sunshine that fell on the settles, you might sit by the long deal table with its benches on either side worn smooth by hungry

The End of a Song

mortals sliding in and out at the dictates of good appetites. Or if you did n't care to sit on the benches by the table, there was the fireplace into whose surrounding depth you might almost disappear and watch the smoke curl up the chimney, tinging the sky with its dusky amber. Take your choice of firelight or sunshine. One of the two you might always have in that room, together with the fuchsias looking in at the windows and the swallows crossing the amber cloud that drew up the chimney to meet the blue above.

Overhead there hung from black oaken rafters some of the bounty of Bethel in flitches of bacon and ham on which crystals of salt glistened. In days gone by, long before the impoverished Morrisises had moved in, those rafters had groaned with provender for the winter's use, and the

The End of a Song

mantelpiece over the fireplace had been brave with copper cheesebowls and brass candlesticks, and the dresser gay with lustre china treasured from days when modern carelessness had not learned to break old jugs and creamers faster than it could have them manufactured even in the cheapest way.

Add to the cheerful firelight the glistening flitches of bacon—for I assure you in every well-conducted Welsh family such ham bodies, though their solstice be no longer than the backbone of man and their orbit dark and unseen, have a very powerful illuminating effect—and to the glistening flitches of bacon add the sunshine, which shone just as if little Lowrie were not ill, and to the sunshine the treble voices of children and the song of a teakettle and the purr of a cat and the lean length of a

The End of a Song

shaggy dog, and you will gain some idea of the peace and joy which may be found in such a humble place. It is pleasant to enter the door as Mrs. Roberts did, to feel the life about you hum even as the teakettle danced at one side of the fire.

Aye, it was a motherly place, that old kitchen that invited you in with the sunshine, that dandled its teakettle beside the fire and cradled its bacon and fed its children and had a warm hearth for a dog and cat to stretch upon, — a much-used, peaceful old kitchen of kitchens, a very comfortable old mother of kitchens that had seen life and death a-plenty, to whom you might go and expect to be warmed and fed and housed — aye verily and not be disappointed!

Into this kitchen Mrs. Morgan the Shop had stepped some time before Nan arrived.

The End of a Song

On the first news of Lowrie's illness she had locked her shop door and left. She had not paused to consider how many more tourists thereby her cousin, Mr. Morgan the Chemist, was likely to catch, or that the school children would soon be running over in their recess to buy sweets. Perhaps the Chemist's contempt for his cousin's business abilities was not misplaced. Maybe she deserved his scorn. However, characteristically she did not stop to think what others might be saying of her. Even if it were nothing contagious, her Deb and Robyn were in trouble, too. That young little Mrs. Glyn Edwards would never be able to manage it all by herself.

When she had stepped into the kitchen, Mali and Pat were crawling around the floor and little Gwynfryn was standing soberly by the window. She went on into

The End of a Song

the big bedroom. Wil Morris himself was there, Tom on his knee, sitting by the bed watching Lowrie whose cheeks were vivid with fever. The older children, with the exception of Maggie, were all at school.

“Och, Wil Morris,” said Mrs. Morgan, “is the child very ill?”

“Aye, I’m thinkin’ ’t is goin’ hard with her,” he replied dully. “Aye, it should have come to me an’ not to the little one.”

Mrs. Morgan placed her hand on the child’s head. “What did the physician say?”

“’T is typhoid fever,” explained Mrs. Glyn. “An’ it came, the Doctor thought, from the flood, an’ the spring gettin’ filled up with what was n’t clean. Mr. Edwards was tellin’ me that even that first day of the flood, after the water had run off an’ everythin’ was upside down, he smelled,

The End of a Song

och! such smells as never were in Bethel before. People must have had their cellars dirty for years in some houses Mr. Edwards an' I know about. 'Tis a pity, 'tis a pity, the poor child!"

It was plain that Mrs. Glyn took all the responsibility for the flood, the spring, and Lowrie's sickness. Mrs. Glyn was not a woman, however young she may have been, to shirk care. One day when she was a little girl of only ten she had burst out crying. Her mother, alarmed, asked what had happened to her. Did she feel ill? Had any one abused her? "Och, mam, mam," she had said between sobs, "I was just thinkin' when I grow up I shall get married an' supposin' I should have a little girl, an' that little girl should fall in the fire an' get burned, how dreadfully I should feel!" And from that day to this

The End of a Song

she had not neglected one single mood or tense of the conjugation of the verb CARE.

“’T was my takin’ ’em in that brought it all,” she explained.

“Tut, tut,” said Mrs. Morgan comfortingly, “they might have caught the fever any place in the village—aye, that they might.”

“Aye, she’s not to feel that way,” added Wil Morris, “for she did all she could for us.”

It occurred to Mrs. Morgan to ask a practical question. “What are ye stayin’ away from work for, Wil Morris?”

“To look out for the little one.”

“Tut, there’s nothin’ ye can do here that women cannot do better. The Warehouse will be goin’ quite nasty with ye for stayin’ away when there’s no need. With the children ill you’ll be needin’

The End of a Song

every penny that you earn, that you will."

"Aye, but I promised the wife when she was sick the last time I'd never leave the children when they were in trouble."

At this point in came Mrs. Jenkins the Inn, little Pat under her arm. "Och, Wil Morris, what are ye doin' here? Ye remember the Warehouse said they'd not keep ye on if ye stayed away from your work again as ye did when Mair was ill."

"But I promised the wife," repeated Wil, "I'd never leave the children when they needed me."

"Aye, but ye're foolish, man, foolish. They're wantin' what ye earn more. An' here are Mrs. Edwards an' Mrs. Morgan to look out for Lowrie an' the babies. An' Maggie herself is big enough to care for the housekeepin'."

The End of a Song

"Aye, I told dad that this mornin', Mrs. Jenkins, but he would n't go."

"I gave the promise to the wife," said Wil dully, "an' that I'll never break."

"Tut, tut!" Mrs. Jenkins's eyes snapped fire. "'T was a foolish promise to be givin' an' a foolish wife to take it. Now ye'll be losin' your work, ye will."

Mrs. Jenkins looked him over critically. He was certainly a strange species of male, silly as a woman in some ways. But was it the thought of the wife which gave his eyes that strange lustre? She stepped up to him and put her hand on his head.

"Wil Morris, ye're sick yourself," she said more gently. "Give me Tom, an' go lie down on that sofa."

"Nay, nay, give Tom to me," begged Nan, who had been quietly seated, defer-

The End of a Song

ring to everything thus far that Mrs. Jenkins had said.

Gradually Mrs. Jenkins, who was accustomed to the ordering of a large establishment, got affairs arranged to her liking. Mrs. Glyn went home to cook dinner for her husband, Mrs. Morgan settled down as nurse for the day, Maggie was in the kitchen doing the cooking, and Nan was taking care of the babies. But before she left Mrs. Jenkins heard Wil calling her.

“What is it?” she asked.

“Ye ’ll not be sendin’ the children away, Mrs. Jenkins, I promised the wife an’—”

“Yiss, yiss, I understand,” replied Jane.

Inwardly she was wondering whether their Welsh mountains had ever sheltered two such impractical idiots as that Mair and this Wil. The stupid fellow had n’t a bit of sense.

The End of a Song

“An’, Mrs. Jenkins,” he went on humbly, “I know I ’m worth nothin’ at all, nothin’ at all, but I promised the wife, an’ now if I ’m to be ill I cannot bear to think of the children out of call. Aye, Mrs. Jenkins, won’t ye let it be so I can call ’em to me? Mrs. Jenkins, ye must make allowances for a father’s feelin’s, that ye must — just so that I can call ’em.”

“Tut, tut, be quiet now, ’t will all be right whatever.”

“Aye,” answered Wil, “but just so I can call ’em.”

XVII

WHEN there was no one else to do it, it was always Mrs. Morgan who went out to nurse the sick. The week-long she had done the nursing and watching, Mrs. Jenkins the planning, Nan the visiting, and Mrs. Glyn Edwards the Baker as much of the housekeeping as she could do.

With a heavy heart Mrs. Morgan had seen Wil Morris turn and toss in his fever and cry out in his unconsciousness, "Aye, let 'em be within call, if you please, mum, just that." Yet the children stealing in tip-toe he had not recognized. In moments when he was conscious he would look up at Mrs. Morgan and say, "Do ye think I made a mistake to stay from the

The End of a Song

work, mum? Ye say the child is better an' I'll go to-morrow."

But the doctor thought that there would be no to-morrow for Wil Morris. And Mrs. Morgan sat there thinking of this, of the little ones, of Deb and Robyn whom she longed to possess, of the poor wife who had left these children, and of all that had happened since the last week in August.

From the sombre old room with its damp walls and rafters and its latticed windows, she could look through an open doorway, — the old door with the heavy stanchion still on it, — out into a luxuriant much-neglected garden, quartered by two geometrical little paths and still bright with late September marigolds. Out there the birds loved the thickets of untended bushes and shrubs, and from dawn to dusk they

The End of a Song

were hopping about, twittering and occasionally singing a snatch of song.

There was nothing to do for Wil Morris now. He lay in the sombre room witless of the journey to come, unconscious of the life that had passed. Very soon a hand would reach within and stop the pendulum that had never swung very far towards joy or very far towards grief. And the life that was yet Wil Morris's would answer that hand and be still. His work for the day would be done, and such joys and such sorrows as he had known would hang pendant, stirred, it may be, to life in his children once more, or unmoved for all the ages to come. And since flesh is as grass and the throng of humanity even as a multitude that has no beginning and no end, it would matter very little. The very memory of man is as a slate which a child

The End of a Song

may wipe clean every morning, and forget the sums of the day that is past.

Yet in Wil Morris there was somewhat that never forgot his children for an instant, that brooded over them and in his unconsciousness called them together and drew the little ones on to his knees — knees that would nevermore be bent to take a step or hold a child or say a prayer, — that fondled their heads and spoke to them of their mother. Perhaps it was this something which never forgot the lives entrusted to it which was Wil Morris's heritage to his children. When his eyes were open and he gazed straight down from his bed upon the little birds, which had followed an Hesperidean adventure of sun-ray all the way to the door sill, and did not see them, or the bright marigolds that shone beyond them, or the bushes, every

The End of a Song

leaf and stem and twig replete with sunshine, or the trees that drooped their canopies of enfolded light and gloom above the garden, — while he saw none of these things, yet in his dull fever-burned mind there wheeled over and over endless thought for the little ones. So by love is a man slipped out of himself, and before life is withdrawn from the body the soul finds its adventure elsewhere. Thus even for poor Wil Morris there was unviolated, perfect as it had come from its mysterious source, the source of all life and all light, a priceless heritage of love.

Call him stupid if you will, — and certainly he was stupid; say of him, as Shon did and as doubtless Wil would have said of himself, that he was “worth nothin’ at all, nothin’ at all”; conclude, as you must, that he made a failure of everything he

The End of a Song

did ; listen to his employers at the Warehouse, who now that they know of the poor fellow's desperate state have sent two weeks' unearned wages, tell of his blunders ! There is nothing here but that repeats the same story, and yet — and yet is that all ?

Something of all this was in Mrs. Morgan the Shop's mind as she watched him. And it was while she was thinking these thoughts that she heard him saying in a sensible voice, "'T is better so."

She leaned over him. "That what is better so?"

"That I 'm goin'. I 'm cumber to the children, aye, no good at all. Mair's callin' an' I 'm wantin' to speak to 'em now."

Wordless, Mrs. Morgan went for the children, and wordless they sat about him

The End of a Song

while he counted them even as a man in a desolate place counts the stars. Nor did he fail to count the faithful head of Gellert among them. Aye, to him they were more than stars, compass and sun and moon and constellation of every hope he now possessed.

“Do the best ye can for them all, Dick an’ Maggie,” he whispered. “Ye’ve been good children. Mrs. Jenkins an’ Mrs. Roberts an’ Mrs. Morgan will know what to do,” he ended with simple trust.

Little Tom, who was sitting in Nan’s lap, caught her around the neck. “Misser Nan,” he cried, “pray de Lawd make dad a good boy.”

“Hush, father is a good boy, darlin’. Dad is sick.”

“Dad good boy?” asked Tom, still wondering what it was that could keep his

The End of a Song

father in bed by day if it was not naughtiness.

“Aye, darlin’, look at dad, he’s lookin’ at ye.”

Little Tom slipped down and ran to his father. “Dad, dad, you good boy. Misser Nan says you good boy. Lemme pet you.”

Wil’s eyes lighted up, then he lifted his head, even as Gelert might have lifted his for a last look at the master’s face, to see Lowrie on the cot across the room. With her counted and the thought of Mair, all the stars in his heaven were numbered. But as he was making this effort, strength left him and his head slipped back to the pillow. Unseen the hand had reached within, and the life that was Wil Morris’s had answered that hand and was still.

XVIII

THE bell-cot over the school gate must have been restored, judging from the way the bell itself whang-whanged, whang-whanged to and fro. Only cement in good condition could stand that clang plus the banging of the school gate and the reverberations of shrill young voices. Nan was watching the children from her bedroom window on the third day after Wil Morris's death. The young voices ought to have made her feel well and happy, but she was happy about nothing, and ill and propped up in a chair.

If a garden beneath your window, in good order once more, if a stream that sings every inch of its way over brown stones and under green trees as blandly as

The End of a Song

if it had never given itself several weeks ago with a violent emotion, fit only for an Italian vocalist, to a swaggering cloudburst, if a white road that led off through the hills to a land of dream that had its Avalon in castles and a dim mysterious isle, if sturdy little cottages, some washed white and some washed pink and some showing traces of sun-worship in saffron yellow, if curling smoke which bespoke the cooking of simple dinners for hearty appetites, and if to all these be added a school-close full of running, dancing, shouting children whose legs seem to be drawn up, out, down, to all sides by some powerful centrifugal force, — if, I say, all these things cannot make a woman happy, then indeed 't is time to call in the physician.

And so thought Shon as he leaned over

The End of a Song

Nan, looking out of the window. "Are ye feelin' no better?" he asked for the fifteenth time.

"Nay," answered Nan, without any attempt at further response.

It was this lack of suppleness in Nan's answers to his questions which troubled Shon as much as anything. Nan's conversation had always been as lithe as her song was blithe. Had he done anything to hurt her feelings, had he? Poor Shon stood behind Nan, ransacking his mind for possible recent offense. He had done everything that Nan had asked him to do, he had carried things to the cottage while Wil was sick, a big bowl of flummery and some jellies for the little girl. Yes, he had done everything that Nan had asked him to do. But now that he thought of it, it was he who had offered to do these

The End of a Song

things, Nan had not asked him. Shon considered the meaning of this, his long shrewd face intent, his kindly eyes looking down on the top of Nan's head. After all she had not asked him for a thing and there had been almost no speech between them. He had taken it for granted that it was because of her grief over the Morrises. Yet there might have been something she wanted. But she always asked for what she wished. For Shon this had been all the adventure his external married life had known; these sallies into his real estate and pocket. Could she have wanted money? Tut, tut, said Shon to himself, she would have asked for it.

It never rained but it poured; and in Bethel, Shon was thinking, it never rained but it poured and cloud-burst. Dear, dear, when had such a year been known in all

The End of a Song

the history of Bethel? And to have Nan ill! Could that sickness by any possibility go as badly as much else had done? She did n't seem very ill, and yet he had never seen Nan this way before, and ill she certainly was.

Their married life had run so smoothly that Shon had not had to give its running a thought. It was Nan's sweet nature, Nan's patience, Nan's tears, Nan's smiles, Nan's receptiveness, Nan's humiliations, Nan's absolute loyalty, Nan's blithe song, Nan's readiness, Nan's love — her tender, merry, clinging love — which had made forty years of married life seem but as a day, forty years of married life go by without a thought of the running, forty years of married life pass without one discordant sound. And all these things Shon had taken for granted, — took for granted

The End of a Song

even at that moment. He had never asked himself what it was he provided in this union besides his own lordly presence and a carefully garnered wherewithal. He had never wondered why a woman should sacrifice her vitality, her youth — and Nan was old for sixty-six — for the man she married. He had never said, “Now have I, too, been tender and receptive and eager?” Nay, he had not wasted himself over little thoughts of this kind; he had never shed any tears about little things — oh, those scalding, useless tears that will sometimes choke a woman while she eats the bread her husband has provided, silly, needless tears of servitude! He had never asked himself, “Could I be humiliated by anything Nan has said or done? Or do I ever have to keep faith in spite of what she does?” Tut, such thinking for him

The End of a Song

would have been preposterous! Imagine Nan, would have been Shon's indignant loyal thought, making any one anything but happy! And there, dear people, because he was a man, probably Shon would have let matters drop. Not that he would have justified himself for any neglect by the excuse of his manhood. It was his inheritance, as much as anything else, that made him blind, generations of fond short-sighted motherhood which had bred in him selfishness in personal matters, and obliviousness to little things which help in the smooth running of any life when lived with another.

Shon's thought had still arrived at no conclusions when he heard the whanging of the school-house bell begin again. The bell bobbed about in its cot as if that were the last place it seriously considered stay-

The End of a Song

ing in, and rolled its brazen little tongue around in an impudent fashion after every whang-whang to which one of the energetic schoolmistresses subjected it. Perhaps it would have been glad to hang out its tongue, like a tired horse, for it was being rung morning, noon, and night. Yet there was no suggestion of fatigue in its stroke. Maybe after all it was just as well that the busy, officious schoolmistress did n't give it a chance to express itself, but dropped the rope with a jerk, and, mounting her rostrum, began to make her own individuality felt in ways not agreeable to youngsters whose legs, despite hands that held hard on to the desks, would dance, would wriggle, would respond to all the mad joy of young blood that warmed them with indescribable excitement even over a funeral. Perhaps it was just as well, for

The End of a Song

very likely the brazen-tongued little bell would have said, like some women, that it did wish it might not have to talk all the time and then, having expressed this wish, — cordially received by other bells, — have gone right on with its clapper-clapper. No doubt it was best that the schoolmistress jerked and dropped the rope as she did, for thereby not only was more clapper spared but also the telling of a lie. Yet I was sorry for that bell, for if there is anything more irritating than an officious schoolteacher, the bell and I have still to discover it.

The children were forming in a line and composing their legs for the march to Wil Morris's funeral. From its cot the bell looked down commiseratingly. Then the schoolmaster himself got a hold of the rope to signal to the chapel and church

The End of a Song

folks that the children were starting. Whang! — there was a great deal too much made of funerals anyway. Whang-whang! — what was the rhyme or reason of forgetting a whole lifetime of joy, of the fun of living, and it was fun — whang-whang, whang-whang! — in these solemn processions to a chapel — whang-whang! — or to a grave? Why not remember when a man had to go — whang-whang, whang-whang! — and the one certainty of life was death, — all the good times, dear, dear, the jolly good times it meant to live? — whang-whang! — it was bad enough to have one's tongue almost clapped out of one's head, without putting on that black down there and marching in a line with handkerchiefs to your eyes — whang-whang, whang-whang! — dear people, what a hand that schoolmaster had! The

The End of a Song

children could tell you that. Why not let a bell sing a decent song of mirth at such a time? There was lots to give thanks for — whang-whang, whang-whang! — Even Wil Morris had much.

At that moment the bell got some rest and looked down from its cot into the street. It was an iconoclast among bells, which was an added reason for not giving it too much freedom with its tongue. To commiseration for all this funeral to-do had succeeded a touch of scorn. Probably a good deal that is said in our towers is not at all what we think it is. As the schoolmaster gave a last quick toll and Nan was leaning forward in her chair and the little school legs were composed in an orderly line for their march, the bell rolled its tongue hopelessly: whang-ng-g! Dear, dear, how foolish people were to go creeping along

The End of a Song

their streets in such a black sombre line just because folks would die after they had had all the fun of living !

“Well, darlin’,” said Shon, “I suppose I must be steppin’ over to the funeral. Before I come home I’m goin’ to send for the physician for ye. Good-by.”

XIX

It was a fine thing on a late September afternoon, with the sun shining, to be bowling along behind a good horse to fetch the physician. So thought Mr. Coach, flicking his top-whip at roadside bushes out of sheer excess of energy and good-humor. Every once in a while Mr. Coach would think of Mrs. C., and as surely as a black-bird warbles at sight of his mate, so certainly did Mr. Coach break into a whistle. On this sunny afternoon she had nothing to worry about nor any rain-pipes to visit — dear people, always much against Mr. Coach's wishes. He was planning a grand surprise for her. In short everything conspired to make Mr. Coach think well of life, a profitable business, a neat little cot-

The End of a Song

tage, a devoted wife, a secret that would in its working out make her happy. On the virtues of an excellent digestion, a robust body, a comely, well-weathered face, he had never happened to ponder. But Mrs. C. — dear, dear, there was a thought to make a man sing like a lark and a black-bird and a nightingale — if only he had not been such a prodigious sleeper — all feathered in one. When he reached the first public house on the way to Portmadoc, he lifted the glass and drank off the contents with gusto to Mrs. Coach. That is, he thought he was drinking to his wife. But for the most part the foolish men who drank there or anywhere on the way to Portmadoc were drinking to a smile they could not see till it was too late. It would have given Mr. Coach quite a start to behold the toothless, eyeless lady who stood

The End of a Song

invisible in the doorway of the public when he lifted his reins and whip and with a final smack of his lips sped on.

Aye, 't was a grand thing to be alive, to see the wonderful mountains on that September afternoon, reaching summit after summit, crag after crag, down to the edge of the sea and back into the zenith of the sky, to have your horse in good condition and your "car" shining, to know yourself to be both a useful person and a person of importance, to go into an outside world in the capacity of an ambassador, to catch a glimpse of the sea in which the cloud-burst had become as nothing, to draw up before the physician's door with a flourish, to chat with him on the long drive back to Bethel over bridges, beneath mountains, through passes, along meadows and streams, past houses, gentle-

The End of a Song

folks' houses, in one of which a young poet had lived many years ago,—under a trestle over which a narrow gauge meant some day to find its straight and narrow way, and finally through the village where every door had its inquisitive occupant, and almost every window, from one of which, indeed, Mrs. Coach herself was looking. Aye, 't was a grand thing to be alive, enough to make a man sit up straight in his covert-cloth suit and look fully the equal of his sturdy, well-groomed horse.

You could n't expect a man with all these capabilities and enjoyments to think lightly of himself, now could you, nor did Mr. Coach when Shon invited him in while he must wait for the physician whom Mrs. Jenkins the Inn was leading up stairs. Certainly he went in and sat before the

The End of a Song

fire in the sitting-room and talked with Shon as one man with another. Maybe he did not represent miles of pasture land and slate bowel-deep in the mountains, and investments in Liverpool, and a staggering bank account in Portmadoc. But what of it? Maybe he had n't after ten years of married life a chick to his name. Perhaps it was his fault—he was sure it could n't be Mrs. Coach's, for she, he knew, was faultless. But what of it again? Did not Mrs. Coach think him the greatest hero that had ever rolled a coach over a Welsh road?

Perhaps he was thinking these very thoughts—men sometimes do—while Mrs. Jenkins was whispering to the physician outside Nan's door.

“'Tis n't anythin' at all, sir. Mrs. Roberts has never been ill or spent a day in

The End of a Song

bed. But I say again, sir, 't is shame because of his stinginess an' grievin' over the child."

"But can't Mr. Roberts see this?"

"Dear people, can Shon Roberts see anythin' at all except his possessions!" exclaimed Mrs. Jenkins in words it would have cut Nan to the heart to hear.

To tell a man he was stingy was like having to tell him that he didn't keep himself clean. That would be hard to do. The doctor felt Nan's pulse and looked at her tongue. To have a thing of this sort to set right was not so easily done as curing actual sickness.

While he was looking gravely and kindly at Nan and wondering how he could take the matter up with Shon, that husband and Mr. Coach were engaged in conversation, Shon his head on his hands

The End of a Song

listening for the doctor's step, Mr. Coach with his thumbs stuck in his vest.

"Aye, so I said, sir, to the wife. 'T is a child she needs, that she does. When I'm away, sir, she should have some one with her."

"'T is bad for a woman to be alone," admitted Shon.

"An' this mornin' I said to her, aye indeed, I did, sir, when we were together at the funeral, 'Wife, let us take one of these children for our own. Mrs. Jenkins the Inn will have the arrangin', an' the youngsters will have to be parted now that the father is dead.' An' you should have seen her smile, sir."

"So you think you will adopt a child?"

"Aye, that I do ; an' you, sir?" asked Mr. Coach sharply.

"I dunno, I'm thinkin' not."

The End of a Song

“Well, sir,” continued Mr. Coach, with a look of relief on his face, “I’ve been thinkin’ all the way to Portmadoc an’ back ’t would be a fine thing to have the little Tom you had here.”

Shon lifted his head. Some one take Tom? Some one else have him? ’T would break Nan’s heart.

“He’s a grand child,” continued Mr. Coach. “He’ll make a fine man, sir. He has a face that wins the heart, an’ the wife took a great fancy to him, that she did. We like Gwynfryn, but he’s more like Wil Morris, an’ I never had any use for that man, worth just nothin’ at all as a man — as a man, I say, sir.”

“Aye, worth nothin’ at all,” repeated Shon absent-mindedly, thinking of little Tom.

XX

THE peace and stillness of a Bethel Sabbath! Even the tripper on a bank holiday, or the tourist, no longer rampant in late September, was unable to disturb that peace. The very sun seemed to rise with a subdued brilliance, effulgent but not resplendent, and the clouds that rested on the mountain-tops drew away veil by veil as in a ceremony, and the stream purred as demurely as an old lady talking to a deacon, and the calls of the birds and the cackle of the fowls came hushed by the general consciousness of that holy day. On the sabbath the milkman left his bell behind him and, rapping quietly on the doors, greeted each comer with a whispered "Good-mornin', mum." And as the

The End of a Song

day had begun so did it proceed, with soft and reverend step from hour to hour until the stars came out and the little village with its whitewashed and saffron houses, its noiseless doors and empty streets, its high encircling mountains, lay, a place of white tranquillity, like a peaceful lily in the moonlight.

Three times during the day were those doors opened and closed by the inmates, — in the morning for the service at ten o'clock, in the afternoon for a vesper service, in the evening for the evening service. And three times during the day the bells rang out, tolling their worshipers into chapel or church, and echoing and reëchoing among the little valleys, reaching even the high meadows of the mountain-sides where the sheep, grazing, paused to wonder over the Sabbath sounds. And

The End of a Song

three times during the day did a long procession of black-clad figures wind its way to chapel by twos and threes, the children making the only bright spots in the white, still streets. And three times did they return and close their doors, leaving the streets empty and soundless once more. All day long the wide, smooth road was unused by horse or pedestrian, the corners empty of their groups of chatting people, the bright window-panes unmarked by curious heads, the brass doorsills uncrossed by guest or stranger.

Perhaps reputations were made and unmade within doors as on week days; it may be family jars broke the silence now and then; or a child with *Pilgrim's Progress* heavy on its poor little knees, rebelled as a normal child should against hyphenated names and a dour, over-anx-

The End of a Song

ious personal salvation, and whining as children always have and always will, when prisoners, for the bright sunshine, the garden space, the stream to wade in, the rooks to watch. Perhaps all these things occurred within doors, but I saw nothing of them.

The only visible object was the officer leaning idly over the restored bridge coping, his slender stick beating a hymn tune on the back of the trouser legs of his uniform, his two quarrelsome little terriers silent at his heels. When the doors opened and the good folk poured out to go to the chapel he reversed his position and, tapping the front of his trouser legs, nodded respectfully to the black-clad figures as they passed. He spoke to each one by name, for in Bethel patronymics were confined to ten: Griffiths, Jones, Roberts,

The End of a Song

Morris, Evans, Wynne, Edwards, Morgan, and Jenkins. But of the Jane Jenkinse alone there were also ten: Jane Jenkins the Wash, Jane Jenkins the Tinman, Jane Jenkins the Warehouse, Jane Jenkins the Milkman, Jane Jenkins the Green Grocer, Jane Jenkins the Hatter, Jane Jenkins the Post, Jane Jenkins the School, Jane Jenkins the Cobbler, and Jane Jenkins the Inn.

But neither to the officer nor to any one else did Mrs. Jenkins the Inn need identification. She was *par Jenkins excellence* THE Jane, every other Jane being hopelessly dwarfed in importance by the mere possession of a similar name. Indeed with Mrs. Jenkins alive it might have been considered a calamity to receive the same name. And so did the officer think it as he watched the line of chapel-going

The End of a Song

folk, for, by every shining button on his immaculate uniform, he admired Mrs. Jane Jenkins the Inn. He would have done anything to please her, even to upsetting the process of law, for he recognized in her capacities, wasted capacities, which would have made a better officer than he did.

Of his presence on this Sabbath Mrs. Jenkins was oblivious. In pursuit of an idea labeled duty she was overlooking even the law. The very daughters about her, blooming of cheek and bright of hair, did not take away so much as an eyelash of Jane Jenkins the Inn's attention from the solitary black broadcloth figure of Shon just in front of her. When the service was over she had something to say to him — aye, that she did! She had made up her mind that Sabbath or no Sabbath

The End of a Song

she would speak with Shon Roberts. She would tell him then once and for all time what it was Nan needed.

During the service she kept her eyes fixed upon the back of his white head where he sat in the deacons' pew just under the pulpit. To Mrs. Jenkins a deacon was as nothing. There was no use in seating them in a pew by themselves, for she knew them as they were. There were six of them present, and even at that moment, beginning with Shon, she was labeling them as follows: Parsimony, Craft, Hypocrisy, Self-Importance, Wrath, and Hectoring. She was not conscious of their virtues of kindness, good cheer, long-suffering, courage, and wisdom. She did not see Mrs. Griffiths the Minister's wife anxiously watching the substitute who was the preacher for the day. On the way to

The End of a Song

chapel Mrs. Griffiths had told the substitute that it always made her nervous until she found out whether the new minister could preach better than her husband or not. On the way home from chapel Mrs. Griffiths's light-heartedness was unmistakably pointed. For Jane Jenkins the glorious song in that painfully ugly building rose and fell in thoughts none too complimentary about a certain deacon's head.

When the service was over she slipped away from her daughters and Mr. Jenkins and down to the deacons' pew.

"I'll be walkin' out with ye, Mr. Roberts," she said.

"Yiss, yiss," replied Shon a little hastily for self-possession.

"How is Nan to-day?" asked Jane.

"She's no better."

"An' she'll be no better, Shon Rob-

The End of a Song

erts, till some things are changed, aye, changed altogether."

Shon exclaimed. It was one thing to be with Jane Jenkins when Nan was by; it was another to be with her alone. They had reached the street by this time.

"'T is what she lacks is makin' her ill," continued Jane, "aye, that it is whatever. She's needin' more freedom, more to do with, an' somethin' more to think about an' care for."

With this assault Shon stiffened. All during the service had he not, with attentive face uplifted to the new minister and thoughts far away, been thinking and thinking what he could do for Nan. Who cared more for her than he did? Certainly not Mrs. Jenkins the Inn. During the service he had been warm with one glorious resolution: he would the follow-

The End of a Song

ing day go for little Tom and bring him home to stay with them always. He was not going to let the Coach or any one else get ahead of him. No one in Bethel ever had. What right had Mrs. Jenkins even to suggest that he did not think of what Nan needed? He said as much.

Mrs. Jenkins's eyes snapped; her temper had always been the equal of her heart and that is saying a good deal.

“Aye, well then, Shon Roberts, why do ye let things come to such a pass with Nan sick in bed an’ grievin’, if ye understand so well? If ye know how, why don’t ye do somethin’ to make her happy? Why don’t ye go fetch little Tom? Ye’d find she would get well fast enough then.”

If there is any man who will stand being told by another woman what he is

The End of a Song

to do for his wife, that man did not live in Bethel and was not Shon Roberts. The very demand that he should take Tom was enough to set him against it.

“I ’m not thinkin’,” he declared, “of addin’ any such burden as a child to Mrs. Roberts’s life, that I ’m not.”

“Then what will ye do for her?”

“Well, I ’m thinkin’ that ’s my affair,” replied Shon coolly.

“Good-day,” snapped Jane.

“Good-day, mum,” concluded Shon.

Jane turned back to her daughters and Mr. Jenkins the Inn.

“Mam,” said her husband, who had seen very plainly that something was happening, “I ’d let Shon Roberts alone.”

But once more Jane ran forward, many eyes upon her, the Sabbath and everything connected with it forgotten. “Mr. Rob-

The End of a Song

erts, I 'm wantin' to say one thing more. For years ye've been makin' a spectacle of yourself an' Nan by your miserliness."

By this time Mrs. Jenkins the Inn was too wrought up to consider what a spectacle she might be making of herself, or to see the rage on Shon's face as he hurried forward to escape her.

Jane followed him now; she was not through with him yet. Pursuing him, she talked vigorously at his back. "Shon Roberts, I 've somethin' more to say to ye, an' ye'll do better to turn about. Ye've shamed Nan in a dozen ways an' never given it a thought. Your one idea has always—aye, that it has been—to give less than people asked or thought ye ought to give so that they would n't come again or would n't ask for so much the next time. An' all these years ye've been con-

The End of a Song

gratulating yourself that no one saw through ye. But they have, an' they're laughin' at ye for it."

By this time Shon was saying, "Tut, tut, tut, Mrs. Jenkins, not here in the street, if you please," and walking forward very fast, Jane talking indignantly and incessantly at his elbow and behind them sly smiles passing from group to group of the long black-clad line which had never seen such a stir as this on Sunday before, but, since Shon was the object of attack, relished it.

"Tut, tut, tut," repeated Shon, as Mrs. Jenkins the Inn's voice became louder and more undignified every minute.

At last he was within a stone's throw of his own door and in a few seconds he could escape through it.

He hurried forward, but Jane kept close

The End of a Song

at his side. "Nay, Shon Roberts," she said in tones louder and angrier than before, "ye have not fooled us in the least, that ye have n't. We 'd have had nothin' to do with ye all these years if it had n't been for Nan. Ye have let her sing an' sing for every penny she's had to give away. 'Tis Nan every one is lovin', not ye. Ask yourself who in all this town cares a farthin' for ye, Shon Roberts. Aye, who does? Bethel would have gone quite nasty with ye years ago with such mean, stingy, low —"

But with the last word Shon slipped through his own door and closed it upon Mrs. Jenkins the Inn's unfinished sentence and upon the amazed and anxious Jenkinses who were collecting about her.

Never had there been such a scene on Bethel streets on a Sabbath before; never

The End of a Song

had heads stuck out so on all sides of the long black line; never had smiles been so broad or so general or so approving; never had the officer gazed with greater admiration at Mrs. Jenkins as at the very elbow of Shon, talking loudly and indignantly, she crossed the bridge; never had the white tranquillity of Sunday streets been so rudely disturbed; and never on the Sabbath at least had a door been shut with such haste and such noise.

XXI

THE following day on which Shon was to have gone for Tom and did not go, Nan seemed better. Her feelings could be swung to and fro between the song and answer of two little birds singing to each other, as lightly as if she were a filament of cobweb, a fairy thread all a-quiver with brightness and dew. But the one thing which you could not do to this delicate thread was to break it. Even the ache for little Tom could not destroy its elasticity. Nan's feelings were more and more assuming their normal condition. It is true that Mr. Morgan the Chemist, since it was the end of the month, had presented Nan with a long account, headed by the nursing bottle,—an account that repre-

The End of a Song

sented the only extravagance, the only evasion of Nan's life in its sum of two pounds, six shillings, and sevenpence. On the day of Wil Morris's death, when the Chemist had brought it to her, Nan had hidden it away. She supposed it was a wicked conscience that had made her resent Mr. Morgan's smile and his question, "Do ye think ye can be payin' it, Mrs. Roberts, aye, do ye?" "Yiss, yiss," Nan had answered hastily. Still Mr. Morgan had held the bill in his hand. "Shan't I be givin' it to Mr. Roberts?" Again Nan could feel her face grow hot as she had bade him give the bill to her.

She would have to tell Shon, and yet she had thought she could never, never do that. But throughout these days when she had been ill, he had been so kind, and on Sunday pitifully kind — almost as if he

The End of a Song

thought he were going to lose her — she had made up her mind during the morning to tell him all when he came in in the afternoon. She had seen so plainly how much he really did love her ; since Sunday he had scarcely stirred away from her, but watched and waited on her and asked a thousand questions. No matter if he had made her unhappy, that did not excuse her for making him wretched. Even if he should never understand all the difficulties he had made for her, these days had brought her reassurance, and reconciliation to the life she lived with him. What would he say when she told him about Mr. Morgan's account? How should she tell him? Would he be angry? Would he cease being kind to her?

Nan was in the midst of this unlimited sort of self-questioning when she saw Mrs. Coach coming towards her door. In Bethel,

The End of a Song

even if you have a servant, you do not wait for her to answer the knocker when you know that a friend is on the other side of the door. That is, supposing you were Nan and somebody else were Mrs. Coach, you do not, when, through your sitting-room window, you see your visitor approaching, continue to sit nonchalantly in your chair, and after the knocker has been answered by the servant still continue to sit in your chair till the guest has come down the hall and has fairly reached the door of the room where you are, then, arising, say with an air of great surprise and in words exquisitely shaped for so important an occasion, "Mrs. Coach, how delightful of you! I had no idea I should see you to-day. I was just hoping not ten minutes ago that you would come!"

The End of a Song

No, no, in Bethel, though it has its conventions like other places and its very superior persons, — for all the world like Lord Curzon, though so inferior, — social life meets at the door, even on the streets, with a frankness without dissimulation. In Bethel you are unaffectedly glad to meet your guest on the very doorstep, if there is time to reach that outpost, — and in getting there no dignity has to be considered. In Bethel among your neighbors doorstep friendliness and hospitality are *de règle*, and you go unconcernedly to meet them more than half way, — indeed, sometimes you fairly run to meet them. Of course you do not greet the stranger or the tourist this way. He is an alien, and to him you curtsy and say “sir” or “mum,” and produce the right money’s worth of lodging or food or service, and keep all

The End of a Song

that is your private life as carefully from his prying or bold eyes as a pasha guards his harem.

When Nan saw Mrs. Coach coming she had no trite phrases or conventional manners to consider, but left her chair hastily and ran to the door.

“Dear me, Mrs. Coach!” she exclaimed to the younger woman.

Mrs. Coach looked up from under the frantic curls that twined about her pale face and said, “Are ye *really* better, Mrs. Roberts?”

She was always a little in doubt about a return to good health.

“Aye, aye,” replied Nan blithely, as glad as a child to see her guest. “Indeed I’m very well, my dear, altogether well.”

“But ye look so tired, dear Mrs. Roberts, ye do,” persisted Mrs. Coach.

The End of a Song

“Tut, tut, tired!” laughed Nan, “who ever heard of such a thing whatever?”

And for that matter there was a livelier expression about old Nan’s face at sixty-six than on young Mrs. Coach’s at thirty-five. Even the cold douches which Mrs. Coach took under the rain spout for Himself had not produced red corpuscles enough — as the medical profession says cold water douches will — faintly to tinge her cheeks. All the pink she could muster was in the dye of her blouse.

“I’m glad ye think ye’re well,” she admitted reluctantly. “Mrs. Roberts, I came to ask about your little Tom.”

Nan’s face shone. “Hundred and a thousand, the child is a lamb!”

Mrs. Coach blinked appreciation. If the word “exquisite” had been in the Bethel vocabulary she would have used it

The End of a Song

now ; at least her expression fairly gushed superlative, but there was no time for her to say anything before Nan went on.

“He’s so lovin’ an’ merry. Mr. Roberts thinks the world of him. Dear, dear, there’s no child like him!”

“’T was my husband who took such a fancy to the child,” said Mrs. Coach. “He thought him so manly. Gwynfryn is a trifle lackin’ in life — aye, a bit as his father was.”

“Is he so!” said Nan. “Well, Tom is gay the day long, a-singin’ an’ dancin’ an’ chatterin’ like the monkey he is.”

“Well, indeed,” commented Mrs. Coach, “’t is what He likes whatever, just what He likes. I can speak to ye, Mrs. Roberts,” she was mournfully looking out from under her curls, “for ye understand what it is to be without children.”

The End of a Song

“Aye,” replied Nan gently, her face wincing.

“Mrs. Roberts, married life is worth nothin’ at all without children. My husband is a-grievin’ an’ a-frettin’ for them all the time—I can see him doin’ it.”

This, like much else in this devoted wife’s life, was in large part a matter of the imagination. But with her such theories always served as facts, and as she, like many women, was unable to distinguish between fact and conjecture, they served quite as well.

“We have been married ten years now. An’ before Wil Morris died, I said, ‘Let us ask Wil to give us Gwynfryn.’ Och, well, ’t is the only way in which we have ever disagreed, Mrs. Roberts. But He’s not carin’ for the child at all.”

Nan’s expression was becoming painfully

The End of a Song

intent. What was the drift of all this talk? If Mr. Coach did not want Gwynfryn, what was it he did wish?

“But on Saturday after he had fetched the doctor for ye an’ come home, he was that excited, that he was. We must be askin’ Mrs. Jenkins to let us have little Tom at once.”

“Little Tom?”

“Aye, an’ ever since it has been Tom this an’ Tom that, an’ to-morrow noon after he comes home from Portmadoc, he’s goin’ to see Mrs. Jenkins the Inn an’ fetch the child.”

“But ye can’t be meanin’ *little* Tom?” repeated Nan.

“Yiss, yiss, little Tom. Mr. Roberts told my man ye’d no thought of takin’ the child back to keep, an’ I was thinkin’ I must find out from ye if he is all my

The End of a Song

husband thinks he is. Is he strong, Mrs. Roberts?"

"Aye, he's strong."

"An' clever?"

"Aye, clever."

At the sound of Shon's footsteps Mrs. Coach rose to go. "'Tis tea-time, Mrs. Roberts. I must be goin'."

XXII

IN Bethel people do not tear their own motives and the inevitable to pieces. No whimpering self-analyst there makes the day wretched. If a man decides to do a thing, he does it; if he decides to change his mind, — and even in Bethel such things have been heard of, — he changes it. That habit of thought which in a larger civilization goes its hydra-headed way over the land seeking whom by worry or fear or unrest or anger or envy it may devour is little known in Bethel. I am sure that is one reason why the sun when it shines there is so amazingly bright, and why the “dew-rain” or the downright rain proves such a satisfactory substitute for sun-rays. Aye, in Bethel you are easily pleased;

The End of a Song

every event seems the event for which you have been longing.

Thus even Shon changed his mind with a good grace on all points except one, and came home with a remarkably light heart. Through the tea-time he rolled up his thin bread and butter at such a rate that Katy had to fill the plate twice, and he ate all the jam there was in the dish, each time he helped himself passing it to Nan without noticing that she took none. He could afford to forget Jane Jenkins and all Bethel, aye, that he could, with such a wife and such a home as he had. He would yet teach Jane Jenkins a thing or two, that he would, the officious, meddling woman.

The Welsh have an adage as old as the most ancient of their bards, that the song is profitable for the soul, in which Shon wholly believed. And after tea he pushed

The End of a Song

his chair back, saying, "Now, darlin', a song."

He followed Nan to the piano, and she began to play introductions and melodies to several well-known airs. But her fingers could n't seem to find what they wished. Would she ever have the courage to tell Shon now all she must tell him? Could she ever be happy again if Mr. Coach took little Tom home on the morrow? What would Shon say if she asked him for Tom? What would he say when he found how extravagant she had been?

"Come, darlin', now sing," urged Shon.

Obediently Nan ran her prelude into the air of a little song called "A Wish":—

"Mine be a cot beside a hill,
A beehive's hum shall soothe my ear,
A willowy brook that turns a mill,
With many a fall shall linger near.

The End of a Song

“The swallow oft beneath my thatch
Shall twitter from her clay-built nest;
Oft shall the pilgrim lift the latch,
And share my meal, a welcome guest.”

On and on went the song. By this time tears were dripping from Nan's chin, unseen by Shon, on to the ivory keyboard, and Nan's throat ached so that she felt she could not go on for another line. But she went on: —

“The village church beyond the trees,
Where first our marriage vows — ”

and there she stopped with a loud sob. And while Shon asked her anxious questions, Nan just dropped her dear old head on the keyboard and wept. How could she ever tell him all she had kept from him?

Shon drew her off the piano stool on to

The End of a Song

his knee. This was not the joyous tea-time he had anticipated. She was sick again, and he ought not to have asked her to sing. He could n't do better now than to tell her of his resolutions, which he proceeded to do.

"Nan, darlin', I've been a-thinkin' that after all ye ought to have a little fortune of your own, all your own to spend —" But there Shon had to stop, for Nan gave an extra loud sob and gasp.

"Tut, tut, darlin'," he said, "some-thin' ye can spend for anythin' ye wish. An' I've been a-thinkin' I'd let ye name your own sum."

At this Nan cried more loudly still.

"Come, come, Nan, what is the matter?"

"Och, Shon, to think of your goodness," she replied, catching her breath, "to think

The End of a Song

of that, an' I've been hidin' somethin' from ye."

"Hidin' what?" demanded Shon, saying not a word of Sunday's scene and the part another had played in his present decision.

"Ye remember the nursin' bottle? Well, it cost more than the s'illin' ye gave me, an' I had it charged; an' then I went again and again, Shon, to have other things charged."

"Well indeed, Nan! How much did ye say?"

"I did n't say, but it was two pounds, six s'illin's an' sevenpence."

"There," said Shon, "we'll manage that, Nan dear."

"An' Mr. Morgan smiled so, he knew I did n't have the money, an' — an'," sobbed Nan, "he wanted to take the bill to you."

The End of a Song

“Smiled, did he?” asked Shon indignantly. “He thinks, does he, that my wife can’t pay a trifle like that?”

Well, well, Shon Roberts, I wonder had Mr. Morgan heard about the seven shillings, all of seven shillings, you gave to the Morrisises?

“Och, I should n’t have done it,” poor Nan was apologizing, “deceivin’ yean’ —”

“Tut, what is all the money for if ’t is not for you? I never dreamed of your needin’ it that way. What pleasure indeed could there be in the gold if I did n’t have you, darlin’?”

“Aye, Shon, but when I wanted it for the Morrisises, ye thought best not to let me have it.”

“That ’s so, but Wil Morris was a worthless fellow an’ ’t would have been just throwin’ money away.”

The End of a Song

“But, Shon, when his wife was alive an’ they were in such need, I asked ye then, too.”

“Well, Wil Morris should have supported her whatever.”

“He did n’t, Shon, he could n’t with all those children. Och, to give only seven s’illin’s to such a needy family — it almost broke my heart.”

“’T was enough whatever,” said Shon testily, “for a family that ’d gone quite on the downfall. If it had been a promisin’ family —”

“But can’t ye see,” interrupted Nan, “that then they would n’t have needed help?”

“Well, ’t is no matter now,” Shon replied more gently. “Ye are to have money of your own, darlin’, to spend in any way ye want. How much shall it be?”

The End of a Song

“A few s’illin’s a week, please.”

“White sugar, but that is nothin’! Let us say a pound, darlin’.”

“A pound all my own?”

“Aye, an’ the first week we’ll add two pounds, six s’illin’s an’ sevenpence to that. On the morrow ye must step in to pay Mr. Morgan.”

Shon was beginning to be sure that before he had finished, Jane Jenkins would have learned a thing or two.

“An’ now are ye happy, Nan darlin’?”

“Aye, Shon,” she replied uncertainly.

“Well, what is it then?”

“Mr. Coach is plannin’ to take little Tom.”

“Aye, I know it, but ye’re not wantin’ the child. Ye’re not strong enough.”

“Och, Shon, I need him more than I do the money.”

The End of a Song

Dear, dear, thought her husband, women were always wanting something they didn't have. True, he didn't want any one else to have Tom, but with giving Nan an allowance, how could he afford to engage in another expense such as bringing up a child? Tom was a fine boy, but adopting him was out of the question. And then there was Jane Jenkins the Inn. What would she say? Probably she would think that she had forced him to this. No, no, anything but Tom now; that would never do.

He heard his wife speaking. "Shon, dear, if 't is the expense, I'd be that careful, indeed I would."

"Aye, well, the expense," said Shon, a little ashamed to seem to consider this after his generous offer.

"Shon, dear," his wife kept on, "I'd

The End of a Song

rather do without the money whatever, if only I might have the child. Ye cannot know how I am achin' for him. He loves us so, — it seemed a miracle to me to have him love us almost as soon as he came to us — as if God meant us to know we must keep Tom."

"Tut, tut," Shon's voice was querulous; "'t is like a child, an' God has nothin' to do with it."

Shon heard Nan catching her breath again.

"What have ye set your heart so on him for? 'T is n't wise to go lovin' a child that does n't belong to ye."

To himself his words sounded less certain, something like this: "Och, well, she's set her heart on him, an' with Nan I'm fearin' that will not be altered. Now the expense — supposin' she knew I was

The End of a Song

thinkin' of that, it would grieve her. But some one must be thinkin' of the expense or there would be no money to support her or the child whatever."

"Shon, dear," Nan began patiently again, fighting as she had never fought before, for the little life she longed to shelter, "Shon, dear, I'm thinkin' of the child goin' to that other home. I'm not wantin' to say what's unkind of any one, but you know what manner of man Mr. Coach is. An' his wife—well indeed, she's a good woman, but she has no character at all. What trainin' do you think little Tom would ever get there?"

"'T is not for us to think of; he's not our child whatever."

"But supposin' he had been our very own baby an' we had died, would ye have wanted him taken there?"

The End of a Song

“’Tis imaginin’ somethin’ ye’ve no cause to imagine.”

“Nay, Shon,” Nan’s voice had grown quieter, “’t is the Golden Rule. An’ I’m thinkin’, Shon darlin’, that a rule we can’t use when it comes to the test, can never be gold for us.”

As that was the first sermon Shon had ever heard Nan preach, it came to him with a strange impressiveness. This little woman with the blitheness all gone from her voice and the happiness from her face seemed scarcely Nan, but more like a gentle rebuking conscience, yet infinitely sterner than the voice of his own self-condemnation.

“To-morrow afternoon they’re going to fetch him home with them. Ye know what that will mean.”

“But ye’ve no strength for the child,

The End of a Song

Nan," said Shon, yet at the same moment he was thinking that if they wished they could get ahead of Mr. and Mrs. Coach.

"Shon dear, I have strength for him. When have I ever been ill before?"

"Ye're right, Nan, when ye say that man drinks too much at the public's. 'T is a disgrace to Bethel. 'T would be a bad place for the child. Well, we'll have to go to-morrow mornin' to get him."

Nan put her arms about Shon's neck — people still do that at sixty-six.

"We'll rise early to get him. Come now, let's finish our song together. Sit here an' we'll sing without the piano."

Shon put one big hand over the little hands folded in Nan's lap, and one arm around her, and she tilted up her little old face and opened her mouth and they sang together.

The End of a Song

When they had finished he said, "Aye, ye've a grand voice, Nan; 't is improvin' all the time. It grows sweeter to my ears every day; 't is worth somethin' to hear such a voice, aye, 't is worth a man's whole fortune, dear darlin'."

XXIII

DEAR, dear, what a day that was! Have you ever wakened early from sheer joy, because you expected something to happen that seemed too good to be true? Have you ever, when you were an old man or old woman, or getting to be one or the other, opened your eyes upon such a day of happiness, that you would n't have exchanged it for any other in the many years that had passed?

Well, this Tuesday morning in the first week in October was such a day for Nan. While she was waking she heard music away off among the mountains, pastoral music which was coming nearer and nearer. This seemed to her just a part of the whole dream that was too good to be true. Soon

The End of a Song

she could distinguish the clear notes of the clarinet and then a violin, a 'cello and finally a harp. Nearer and nearer drew the music, bringing with it she knew not what of the mystery of the hills, the quiet of the valleys, the richness of the meadows, the song of the rivers. On and on it came, a part of the rising of the sun, of the happy dreams she had just left, of the love that had become her life, of the new joy that was to be. She could hear the clarinet sing out its round full note, the very voice of wildwood glee ; she could hear love in the strings of the violin and the answer from the 'cello ; and she could hear the liquid notes of the harp sing their undertone like running water. Yes, it was real music, not something she had brought from her dreams, and it drew nearer and nearer in an ecstasy of pastoral delight. She lay

The End of a Song

there, lifted away from herself, a part of its fantasy, its melody, played upon even as the harp was or as the wind plays upon a fir-tree.

Then she spoke to Shon. "Do ye hear it, darlin'?"

"Yiss, 't is some music comin' through the pass into town an' stoppin' by different houses."

"'T is too beautiful to be true, like little Tom an' the s'illin's."

"Well, dear darlin', we have much to do, so let us be up," replied Shon. "If 't is a street band, as I think it is, ye can give them a penny all of your own."

It proved to be a band of young wandering German students. Nan called in the lad who held the cap, and with her money in the big purse she had put it in, she carefully counted out two shillings and smiled

The End of a Song

into the boy's eyes. Then the lads played their prettiest music for Nan, the very soul of melody in their slender fingers, and, lifting their caps and bowing, they went away down the street, the richer by two shillings, but far the richer for having remembered something which no one ever forgot who looked into Nan's eyes.

After breakfast she put on her little bonnet and went forth in the same direction, purse in hand. She did not dally, but hurried along importantly to Mr. Morgan the Chemist's.

"Good-mornin', Mrs. Roberts," said that specialist, rubbing his hands.

Nan was already busy with her purse, out of which she took the account, and opening it, said, "'Tis two pounds, six s'illin's an' sevenpence, Mr. Morgan, I believe."

The End of a Song

“Yiss, yiss, correct, mum, but there’s no hurry.”

All friendliness and good-will, Nan beamed on him. “’T is quite convenient, Mr. Morgan, quite convenient.”

Mr. Morgan was secretly amazed. The “pum gloud-purst” had not surprised him more. He was eaten up, too, with curiosity. If he dared take advantage of a person, Mr. Morgan had been known to ask very impertinent questions. He extracted ample information out of the village servants. And as almost no one was too poor to have a servant, he could find out anything he wished to know. Even Jane Jenkins the Wash had a half-grown serving-girl. He thought now of the Roberts’s Katy; he would stop Katy some early morning as she went to the spring.

Nan counted out the money with great

The End of a Song

seriousness. "Two pounds, an' three, four, five, six s'illin's, sixpence an' a penny, sevenpence. Is that right?"

"Yiss, yiss, mum, exactly right."

"Good-mornin', Mr. Morgan," said Nan, her head high with pride.

"Good-mornin', mum," replied the Chemist.

As she hastened out of his door, Nan almost ran into Mrs. Morgan the Shop, who, with Robyn and Deb beside her, was waiting for Mrs. Roberts to come out.

"I was lookin' for ye, Mrs. Roberts."

"Yiss, yiss," answered Nan, now that she saw Robyn and Deb, in a fever to be off.

"I'll walk along with ye a step or two. Deb and Robyn, mind the shop while I am gone."

"Did ye hear the music?" asked Nan,

The End of a Song

not saying what was uppermost in her thoughts.

“Aye, ’t was grand. I called those lads in, an’ the children an’ I gave ’em a bit of breakfast. ’T was a thank - offerin’, Mrs. Roberts, for all that has been done for me. I dunno,” she went on thoughtfully, “before I had the children I did n’t miss ’em, but after I had them I could n’t live without them, that I could n’t. I was like an old cow lowin’ for her calf.”

Nan patted Mrs. Morgan the Shop’s arm with one little black-gloved hand. “I ’m on my way now for Tom. Shon is comin’ after in a minute. We’re startin’ early to be sure to get him. Mr. and Mrs. Coach have been thinkin’ somethin’ of takin’ him.”

“Dear people!” exclaimed Mrs. Morgan, stopping to laugh then and there in

The End of a Song

the street. "When have I heard such news as this! Indeed, 't is too good to be true whatever. I knew that Mr. and Mrs. Coach were plannin' to take the child, but you'll get there first now." Mrs. Morgan squeezed the little black-gloved hand. "Maybe children are a trouble. I dunno. But they're more a blessin'. Good-by."

Nan went hurrying on all the faster. The winged feet of Mercury could not have satisfied the love that outran her heavy little boots, which, for all that, were fairly nimble in covering the ground.

XXIV

Mrs. MORGAN was walking back to her shop amply content with everything as it was, when in the distance she espied Mr. and Mrs. Coach coming down the street.

“Dear people,” she exclaimed in alarm, “an’ Shon Roberts has not yet gone by!”

They would soon reach her where she stood in her shop door thinking what she could do to help Nan. “Good-mornin’, ’t is a grand day,” she said.

“Yiss, yiss,” replied Mr. Coach, who was for going by hastily.

Mrs. Coach lingered a little. “I hear ye have Robyn and Deborah. It makes a difference.”

“Yiss, it makes a difference.”

The End of a Song

“Come, wife, come. We’ve important business, Mrs. Morgan.”

“Have ye so?” Mrs. Morgan’s eyes took a flit up the street. No, Shon Roberts was not in sight. Mr. Coach was already moving off. “Is it about one of the children?” she asked.

“Aye, ’t is, an’ my man, as ye can see, can’t wait to get away.”

“Is it Gwynfryn?” Mrs. Morgan’s eyes took another slant up the road. Still no Shon.

“Nay, nay,” replied Mrs. Coach, with a look at her husband. “’T is the child the Robertses had.”

“Dear people, the child the Robertses had? Ye don’t say!”

“Aye, I do,” returned Mr. Coach. “We’re likin’ him better whatever. Shon Roberts would never think of takin’ any-

The End of a Song

thin' into his house that would cost so much as a child costs to fetch up. Tom will be grand company for the wife. We must be off now. We're lingerin' too long, an' we have Mrs. Jenkins the Inn to see."

Jane Jenkins, thought Mrs. Morgan, how in the world could she provide for that emergency too?

As Mr. Coach's motto—you see, he had lived in such a coachly scramble of folk for the box seat—was "Every one for himself and God for all," and as the first part of this wisdom was the only part over which he had any control, he believed in following up everything at the earliest possible moment.

"Ye don't mean little Tom, little Tom Morris?"

Mrs. Morgan's eyes were taking another flitting up the street. There was Shon Rob-

The End of a Song

erts just coming around the corner. Now how could she get Mr. and Mrs. Coach out of sight for a moment? She could; the bottom of her sack was not yet reached.

“I’ll not detain ye more than an instant. I want to see ye on business, Mr. Coach. Won’t ye step in?”

“Nay, we’ll stop on the way back, or I’ll come in after the trip to Portmadoc. We’re in haste now.”

“Och, the pity! I’ll not be in then. I’m takin’ the children on a trip,” — blessed improvisation! — “an’ if ye’ll be steppin’ in I’ll not keep ye. ’T is somethin’ I’m needin’ this mornin’.”

By this time the children were clamoring noisily, “Where we goin’, tell us where we goin’.”

“Hush!”

Mr. Coach entered reluctantly. Mrs.

The End of a Song

Morgan saw Shon coming nearer and nearer.

“I ’m wantin’ some good quality of rice from the city. Have ye your note-book with ye? Yiss.”

“But we have rice,” said Deb, looking into a big sack full.

“Ssh, I ’m wantin’ more; yiss, twenty-five pounds if you please. An’ let me see, fifty pounds of sugar — an’ —”

“Here ith a barrel of thugar,” lisped Robyn.

“Dear lamb, be still! Rice an’ sugar are in great demand an’” — Shon was passing the door at that instant — “an’ a dozen tins of tongue.”

“There ith Mither —” but Robyn got no further, for Mrs. Morgan drew him playfully towards her and covered his mouth with her hands.

The End of a Song

“Children should be seen an’ not heard, little lamb. An’ I ’m needin’ some of the marzipan potatoes — aye, those that sell at a penny apiece. The children have bought all I have — dear love, do be still.”

But Robyn had slipped away and was clapping the lid of a box up and down under her very nose.

Shon Roberts was by now fast getting out of sight, while the Coach, his broad back to the door, a scowl between his eyes, a note-book in hand, unwillingly took down his commissions. One more commission would help to save the situation for Mrs. Roberts, and she was ransacking her mind for something else — the whole vegetable and animal kingdoms seemed to have taken unto themselves wings — thank God, there went Jane Jenkins hurrying after Shon!

The End of a Song

“Let me see, marzipan potatoes, I think I said. Aye, I see, darlin’, the box is empty.”

“Emphy?” Robyn looked with disgust at his adopted mother.

“Yiss, yiss, now don’t hinder me. Mr. Coach is wantin’ to get away. An’ five pounds of the chocolate—aye, if you please in the quarter-pound cakes.”

Shon was out of sight.

“An’,” said Mrs. Morgan the Shop very slowly—this for good luck—“an’ a tin of good fortune. Dear, dear, I’m losin’ my head. I’m meanin’ to say a tin of good biscuits. Aye, that is all. I’m hopin’ ye’ll find Mrs. Jenkins in. Ye’re goin’ to see Mrs. Jenkins about the child first?”

“I thaw—” began Robyn. But Mrs. Morgan interrupted him and, drawing him towards her, this time covered both his

The End of a Song

mouth and his eyes with her hands. While she held him firmly she could feel him licking out his sentence on the inside of her hands.

When she finally released him, the Coaches were well across the street.

“Whath you do that for?” demanded little Robyn hotly.

“Savin’ souls,” replied Mrs. Morgan.

“I thaw Mitthith Thenkins goin’ up the thtreet,” continued Robyn.

“Did you so? Well, you must n’t tell everythin’ you see, darlin’.”

“Whath thavin’ thouls?” persisted Robyn.

“’T is makin’ them happier whatever.”

“Wath you doin’ that to them?”

“I dunno. Dear, dear me, what a ten minutes!”

XXV

ABOUT the time that Nan parted from Mrs. Morgan, Shon left his door and started down the street after his wife. He had been saying to himself, as he waited, "Now she's at the Chemist's paying her bill whatever. Perhaps she'll stop a minute to speak with Mrs. Morgan. Aye, Mrs. Morgan is a grand comfortable woman." Then followed thoughts which were somewhat to the disparagement of a certain person who was not so "comfortable." "By this time," he continued, "she'll be half way to Tom's. 'Tis time for me to go."

He put on his hat, and telling Katy to have everything ready for Mrs. Roberts when they returned, he walked out into

The End of a Song

the crisp autumn air of this Tuesday morning, just five weeks to a day since the cloud had burst on Moel Hebog. Yet at this moment, to see the expression on his face, you could not have guessed how heavy his losses had been. You would never have dreamed that there had been any cloudburst at all or that it had selected Shon's mountain for bursting purposes, or that it had gutted out his meadows and swept away his sheep and his trees or dashed into his garden or in short disturbed a single interest of his. For he, too, had a way in which he could forget himself even as Mrs. Morgan forgot herself, or poor Wil Morris, or Nan, or, for that matter, Jane Jenkins. He was thinking of his wife, and the whole day seemed to him triumphantly happy because he knew how happy she was. But if he had not loved Nan

The End of a Song

better than his gold, perhaps he would, as other miserly people have done, have forgotten the fatherless altogether, ridden ruthlessly over the strength and hopes of another, neglected his kin and let their children meet unhelped those hardships which no young thing is fitted to overcome, bullied his wife and defied his neighbors altogether. But his salvation — a salvation that was to grow brighter with the years still to come — lay in the little figure whose heavy stubby boots could not take her forward fast enough to protect and mother a child. Otherwise who knows! He might have been like the frank barbarians of this world, and no little child have been able to turn his coin into that gold which never perishes but lives in the love and faith and unselfishness of hearts that serve.

The End of a Song

Already the money he had given had blessed itself twenty times over, in her eyes, in his own, in the eyes of that German student, — somebody's boy, — in the esteem it had won from Mr. Morgan the Chemist, and in the still unknown kindly plentiful ways it would spend itself.

Shon had let Nan go on alone because he had wished her to have all the honor of paying her own bill. But now he could not follow after fast enough. He was thinking of little Tom coming home between them when he heard rapid steps behind him.

“Good - mornin’, Shon Roberts,” said the voice of Jane Jenkins. Mindful of Sunday noon, Shon pulled himself together and greeted her pleasantly.

“I’m on my way to the Morrisises’.”

“Is it so?”

The End of a Song

Shon said nothing of Nan or himself.

“Aye. The family must be separated in a few days. ’T is a pity, but there’s no way of holdin’ ’em together.”

“’T is a pity,” agreed Shon.

“Mr. Jenkins an’ I were talkin’, an’ he said what I always thought, that boys would be more useful to us than girls. They’d be a grand help to Mr. Jenkins when they’re a bit older, that they would. I said nothin’ to Mr. Jenkins, but I’m goin’ over now to fetch back one of the older boys, Howell, an’ little Pat. Mair has set her heart on havin’ Pat. She’ll have to bring him up whatever, for I’ve brought up four, an’ my duty to the country in nursin’ babies is done. I’ve other things to think of.”

For a few steps they walked along silently side by side.

The End of a Song

“Shon Roberts,” said Jane, thinking of the other things, “don’t ye believe it is time to be makin’ little Tom your own?”

“I dunno. Nan was fond of the child.” Shon’s eyes twinkled.

“I mean adoptin’ the child.”

“I see, adoptin’. Well, adoptin’ other people’s children, Mrs. Jenkins, is a dangerous business.”

“Tut!” ejaculated Jane. “In such a lottery ye’re likely to get somethin’ better than your own might have been, aye, indeed.”

“Is it so?”

Jane Jenkins cast a searching glance at him. “Where are ye goin’, Shon Roberts?”

“Down the road.” Then he added gallantly, “I’ll be walkin’ on with ye.”

The End of a Song

“To come back to the children, Shon. I ’m thinkin’ ’t would be a grand good investment for ye to take little Tom. Did ye realize that weeks ago Nan had set her heart on him? But there, a man never sees anythin’ unless you rub it on his nose the way you rub sulphur an’ treacle on a dog’s — that he does n’t.”

“Dear me, Mrs. Jenkins, ye’ve not much of an opinion of us, have ye?”

“Aye, when ye’re doin’ what ye were sent here for.”

“An’ what is that, Mrs. Jenkins?”

“Workin’ an’ leavin’ the plannin’ to women. Men have no judgment whatever. If the women had the makin’ of the laws, too, they’d be better laws. A man was made for his arms an’ legs; he’s not an ounce of judgment in his composition.”

“Is it so, Mrs. Jenkins? Dear me, ’t is

The End of a Song

somethin' like the ideas I see in the Liverpool *Daily*, held by the ladies quite high up."

"Well, Shon Roberts, ye may jest if ye please, but Nan would never have been ill if ye had had the judgment to see how much she needed little Tom."

By this time they had reached the Morris cottage, and Jane turned to him. "Won't ye be steppin' in for a look at the children?"

"Aye, to oblige ye, Mrs. Jenkins."

When they found Nan inside, Jane looked sharply at him again, but his face was bland and unselfconscious.

"Jane dear, I'm that happy," said Nan, little Tom sitting in her lap and the other children standing about, Pat in Jemima's arms and the little nameless one in Maggie's.

The End of a Song

“Are ye takin’ Tom?” Mrs. Jenkins asked suspiciously.

“Aye, we will,” replied Shon. “I’m thinkin’ your advice was good, Mrs. Jenkins.”

“Well, indeed,” was all Jane could say.

Shon turned to his wife. “Have ye everythin’ ye want, Nan, darlin’?”

“Aye.” Nan was fumbling in her purse, and finding a sovereign gave it to Jane. “’Tis for the other children,” she said proudly.

“Come,” repeated Shon, “if ye’ve everythin’ ye wish.”

Nan got up, and taking Tom’s hand, started for the door. “Och, hundred an’ a thousand!” she exclaimed, looking back at Maggie and the little nameless one.

Her husband followed her glance. “Is it the little one?”

The End of a Song

“Aye, ’t is so helpless an’—”

“Shall we be takin’ the little one home, too?”

If the heavens had opened and Nan had looked through to the Holy of Holies there, her eyes could not have shone more wondrously as Maggie placed the baby in Shon’s arms.

“Shan’t I carry your Pat for ye, too, Mrs. Jenkins? A man was made for his arms an’ legs, an’ mine are grand strong legs still.”

“In a minute. Maggie, where’s Lowrie? Is she better?”

“Aye, Mr. Edwards carried her over to his home this mornin’ to stay.”

“Did he so!” exclaimed Jane. “Then ’t is five remainin’.”

Shon took the little nameless one on one arm and Pat on the other, and with

The End of a Song

Tom and Howell and Gelert they were all about to leave, when in rushed Mr. and Mrs. Coach, he red and panting, she pale and breathless.

“Mrs. Jenkins, Mrs. Jenkins,” panted Himself, “we were lookin’ for ye an’ went to the Inn an’ they said — we want the child —”

“What child?” asked Mrs. Jenkins.

“Little Tom; ’t is little Tom he has set his heart upon. Och, Mrs. Jenkins!” There was a world of reproach on her face as Mrs. Coach looked from little Tom, who was tightly holding Misser Nan’s hand, to Mrs. Jenkins herself.

“Aye, well,” replied Jane loyally, “ye’re too late by ten minutes. Mr. Roberts came up with me to get little Tom. You see, in a way the boy already belonged to them. They’ve decided upon

The End of a Song

takin' the baby, too. But there's Gwyn-fryn that ye had with ye after the cloud-burst. He's happy beyond words to see ye."

And as they all left the cottage she said to herself, "'T is four now."

XXVI

“MISSER NAN, can I pray de Lawd ford Misser Jenkins?”

“Dear lamb, yiss, yiss,” replied Nan, while Shon chuckled to himself.

“Misser Jenkins good boy,” said Tom sweetly when he had finished his little Welsh prayer.

He lay there gravely watching Nan and Katy care for the nameless one.

“Wid you buy me a baby?”

“Dear people, a baby?”

“Aye, a baby like dat baby all ford me.”

“Dear darlin’, I don’t know where to buy you a baby,” chirped Nan.

“In Misser Morgan’s shop. Robyn says she has babies.”

The End of a Song

“Dear lamb, you mean doll babies. Aye, that kind of a baby I’ll buy you.”

“‘Night,” he said, slipping under the bed covers.

Nan and Shon talked on in whispers. Katy had tiptoed downstairs.

“We’ll have to be namin’ the little one, Nan. What shall we call it, mam? Aye, aye, ye’re mother now.”

“An’ ye’re dad, Shon darlin’. If’t were a boy ’t would be easier.”

“I’m thinkin’ ’t is easier as it is. We’ll call her Nancy.”

“Tut, father, I’m wantin’ to name her Jane.”

“’Tis an ugly name.”

“An ugly name, Shon! ’T is a grand name whatever, an’ I’ve set my heart on havin’ it.”

“Well, indeed,” said Shon slowly, “ther

The End of a Song

let us be callin' the little one 'Nancy Jane Roberts.'"

"Aye, but the other way, 'Jane Nancy Roberts.'"

"Nay, mam, it does n't sound right so. It must be Nancy Jane Roberts."

"Misser Nan, Misser Nan," cried Tom, opening eyes that had been half asleep, "I won't hab to leab you?"

"No, no, darlin', not again."

Tom started for sleep once more while Nan and Shon sat quietly by. Suddenly he cried out again, "I'll be here in the mornin' when I wake up, Misser Nan?"

"Yiss, yiss, darlin', here, always here."

Nan went over to soothe his hot little head where it lay with rumpled hair and wide-awake eyes on the pillow.

"He's that excited, Shon. The day has been too much for him."

The End of a Song

“Well, well, sing him a lullaby, an’ he’ll be asleep in the shake of a lamb’s tail.”

So Nan began with a little song which she sang to the tune of “All Through the Night,” and which may have been sung to little ones since the days of the Druids. With each “one, two, three,” in which Shon joined with his alto, Nan gently drew her dear hand over Tom’s wide eyes.

“Look at me, my little dear! —

One, two, three:

Let me whisper in thine ear; —

One, two, three:

Bid thy playmates all retire;

Sit thee down, and draw thee nigher;

See the bright inviting fire! —

One, two, three.

“Supper o’er my soul rejoices —

One, two, three:

The End of a Song

When praise is sung by infant voices ! —

One, two, three :

On lap maternal now undressing,

Brothers, sisters, — all caressing,

Bend the knee, and beg a blessing ! —

One, two, three.

“ From toil the World itself reposes ! —

One, two, three :

Around him Night her curtain closes ! —

One, two, three :

Lo ! Sleep thy tranquil bed's adorning,

Playful dreams and plans are forming !

Rest till Heaven restores the morning ! —

One, two, three.”

Before they reached the last stanza,
Tom was sound asleep.

“ Hundred an' a thousand ! ” exclaimed
Nan softly.

“ The world's value ! ” whispered Shon.
As they slipped noiselessly downstairs

The End of a Song

the door knocker clapped and Jane Jenkins the Inn entered.

Nan put her fingers to her lips.
“They’re asleep.”

Shon, after speaking, went quietly out and shut the door. For two or three minutes, while Nan and Jane sat before the open grate in the sitting-room, his foot-fall on the silent moonlit street could still be heard.

Within doors there was no sound except the fluttering of the fire and the ticking of a grandfather clock in the hallway. From the unlighted room through the windows they could see the stars and the whiteness of the moonlight and the tranquil streets, all singularly peaceful on this cold October evening.

“How are the babies?” asked Jane.

“Grand babies, Jane dear.”

The End of a Song

"There are only four left now to find homes for."

"Well, they 'll prove a blessin' as the others do. To think a cloud-burst could bring so much happiness! If it had been just the annual flood everythin' might have gone on in Bethel as it always has."

"They've been somethin' besides a blessin'. They've meant work mornin', noon, an' night these many weeks, that they have."

"I dunno, Jane, as blessin's come without work."

"How does Shon feel about 'em?" Mrs. Jenkins the Inn still saw an open purse and still marveled over Shon's readiness to add a second baby to his household.

"He thinks they're grand babies. We

The End of a Song

have been namin' the little one after you and me."

"Dear me!" Jane was smiling, but only the stars outside which were looking in at her saw that smile. "Is he goin' to let you have somethin' of your own to spend?"

"Yiss, yiss, a pound a week anyway an' more if I want it."

"Is he so! He was not thinkin' of it when I saw him on Sunday." Jane wanted to bite her own tongue out for having said what she did, but it was too late.

"Did ye see him, Jane dear, on Sunday? He said nothin' of it."

"Aye, but just for a minute."

Nan sat there thinking, perhaps a good deal more then she was willing to tell. Finally with a little sigh she said, "I was singin' to him Monday at tea-time, an' I

The End of a Song

dunno what was the matter, but the thought of losin' Tom, of havin' some one else have him, was too much for me — aye, it was."

"What did ye do?" demanded Jane. "Did ye say somethin' to him?"

"Nay, I fell to cryin' in the very midst of my song."

"An' then what happened?"

"I tried to make him understand. Yiss, yiss, he's a grand man whatever. No woman in Bethel has a better man nor mine."

"Do ye think he did understand?" persisted Jane.

"I'm thinkin' he did an' I'm thinkin' he did n't, Jane dear."

"Well indeed," concluded Mrs. Jenkins the Inn, "anyway the end of that song was a penny."

The End of a Song

“Aye, an’ a baby,” added Nan, smiling peacefully.

“Two babies,” corrected Jane.

THE END

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